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Beyond This Darkness

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BEYOND THIS DARKNESS

What the Events of Our Time Have Meant to Christians Who Face the Future

By Roger L. Shinn

A HADDAM HOUSE BOOK

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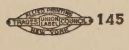

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Preface

THIS LITTLE BOOK is an attempt to write in ink a small part of what many men and women have written in their life blood. It comes from one who had a part in the terror and slaughter of the Second World War, but who knows that no one who lives today with sound body and mind in the security of America can know what this war has cost and is yet costing those who paid a greater price than we. Yet it may be hoped that it can convey a bit of what the faith of Christianity says to this tortured globe today.

Honesty is a severe requirement on any who would try to grasp the Christian hope. There can be few condemnations more awful than the word of the Lord, as it came to Jeremiah, against the priests: "They have healed the hurt of my people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace." Christianity offers a hope that is real, but no one has a right to talk of that hope unless he has looked hard at the stark facts of our time. I have tried to be honest, to conceal no harsh truth in optimism.

This book is dedicated to all those people of every country, civilians or fighters, who suffered in the Second World War with a hope of serving God and helping men. It is directed to young men and women who are looking forward, who will live their lives in the world that they must help make.

Three former chaplains have contributed experiences and criticisms to the author, who was not a chaplain: Albert B. Buchanan and Charles Arbuthnot, who served with the army in Europe, and Robert Appleyard, who was with the navy in the Pacific. The members of the Publication Committee

of the Hazen Foundation, and especially Dr. John Bennett, have been helpful in criticism and generous when in disagreement. I am grateful to Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr who has read the manuscript. Although probably none of the above would agree with everything I have said, their help has been great.

The *Intercollegian* has kindly allowed me to use a few paragraphs, in Chapters III and IV, which were first printed in its issue of September, 1945.

R.L.S.

New York, 1946.

Chapter I

Lest We Forget

TODAY IS A BIT OF TIME between yesterday and tomorrow. Today, on the planet Earth, hangs between a tremendous past and an uncertain future. In America, as in many lands, men look toward the future and see a giant question mark. This question mark of tomorrow throws its shadow over today, and no one stands outside that shadow.

In the process of time and history, today and tomorrow flow out of yesterday. We can no more escape the past than we can the future. In the past that we have known, one event stands closer and more terrible than the rest—the Second World War, with all that it brought. It has shaken the thoughts of all men. With a special intensity it has struck into the lives of men who face the future with the faith of Christianity. That men should suffer so, and cause others to suffer so—this does not make sense. This is what we are going to think about in this book.

A Letter from Another World

A few days ago a friend of mine received an envelope with an unfamiliar stamp and postmark. He was puzzled as he picked it up and opened it. Inside he found a picture postcard—a view of a child standing in a field. On the back was a handwriting he had never seen, but a name he remembered. It belonged to a family he had known in Luxembourg, long ago. How long ago? He stopped to figure. Measured in years and months, it was not very long. But in the perspective of the changes wrought by history, it seemed like a distant past and another world.

He thought of a bitter campaign fought since that time. He thought of an evening on the Danube River, when after days of rumors he had heard a radio message and the voice of the King of England announcing the end of the European War. He remembered another tremendous night—it was August 14, 1945—when like men around the world, he had waited impatiently near a radio for the voice of President Truman. Then it had come, with the message of Japan's surrender. He remembered the rejoicing of that night, the relief from fear, the reports of exultation from great continents and tiny islands, wherever there were men. A few men had prayed that night, for this was the end of the war.

But it was not the end. It was no more the end than the Armistice Day of 1918 had been the end of the First World War. Now, holding this postcard that seemed to come out of his past, he could see things more clearly than on the night of victory. Then, men said, America and her Allies had won the greatest war the globe had ever seen. At last America was safe and free. Or so men liked to think. But even that night he had wondered whether men knew what the war had cost and what victory might mean. Now, on the day when he received this picture of a European child, he was sure that many had not understood what the war and its ending meant. He was sure that many had already forgotten the war that was really not over.

. . . . . .

This friend was right. The memory of America is short. It is convenient and easy to forget. A few statues in public places, a larger number of graves frequented by a faithful few, an occasional speech on a national holiday—these are the remembrances of wars gone by. Of what history said to us in those wars, our politicians and our people remember little.

Now, after the worst of those wars, the deeper meanings of the struggle are easily evaded or forgotten. Many, it seems, knew the war mainly as inconvenience. The months following it saw the clamor for lifting restrictions, enjoying more food, getting the soldiers back home, and settling back to the old life. Some of these ideas were good, some bad; but running through them all there seemed to be a familiar refrain, "back to normalcy." Men who stepped in a few days time from the lands where the battles had raged, into strong, free, victorious America could scarcely comprehend it. This urge to get back to normal was a strange contrast to the scenes they had left. It was a momentary shock; yet soon they felt the same reaction themselves. Too few understood that there could be no normalcy again, that this great upheaval of history had changed the pattern of the modern world, that either we must do something immensely better than our world had done before or else we must face something incredibly worse.

Of course, war had its insistent reminders. There were still millions of men in the services. There were deaths too recent to overlook. There were newspaper stories of conferences where representatives of nations disagreed, of presidents and premiers and their meetings, of dissatisfied rumblings around the world, of terrible threats from man's scientific prowess. But these were shoved to the back of men's minds.

Now, though it seems incredible in the first years after the war, America must be reminded. *Our freedom was bought with a price.* Before the war becomes more distant, we had better count the cost.

Casualties—Men, Hopes, and Ideals

First, there were men. Death struck with an undiscriminating hand, cutting down the good and bad, the strong and

the weak. In the American Army and Navy, battle deaths were 396,637 men. The bare figure means little. But before the war ended, most Americans knew one of the thousands. In that one whom they knew, they began to see the cost of the war. That one whose body lay on a foreign shore was immensely important; for a few, he overshadowed for a moment the entire war. He was one man. But he was more than one. He was one man, repeated again and again throughout America, repeated and repeated four hundred thousand times. He was the man in every community who died in battle.

Four hundred thousand dead. More hundreds of thousands wounded. Many could never again control a healthy body. Many a mind had been ruined. And this was in America only. This was in the only great nation that had not felt enemy troops on its soil, or the rain of death from the skies in its cities. This was a country whose homes had been safe. Casualties mounted higher among our allies. The British and Russians paid more than we. Men and women of other lands died in Scandinavian or Balkan mountains, in the jungles and plains of Asia, in Philippine and Indonesian Islands. There were dead Germans in concentration camps; these too helped pay the cost.

No one will ever know the total number of military casualties in this slaughter. Far less will we know the number of civilians killed by the twentieth century war-god who spares no one. Nor can we conceive of the children who must grow up without parents, of the wives who lost husbands, and the husbands who lived in battle while their wives were killed at home. It makes no difference that we do not know the number. What we know is already beyond our comprehension.

The cost is not reckoned only in destruction to life. Many who still live are forced to wonder whether life was worth snatching from destruction. *A second great entry in the*

cost ledger of the war must be disillusion and despair. Here one must wonder whether America can understand in the slightest what is happening around the world. The death we shared, but despair is something else. The American soldier, however he suffered, knew that if he lived he would return home. He would not have to live in the mess that his fighting created. Beyond the war was this escape from the worst of reality.

But when he left the battlefields, he left despair behind him—a despair as real and as bitter as the Black Plague of past centuries. Consider an example. Nazism killed, by its own admission, at least six million Jews. For them, the sting of war and hate is past. But more than a million remain. For them, hope is a casualty of the war. The healthy spirit of men who can cope with their world has been shattered. Months after the war they live in camps controlled by the army, or wander homeless from land to land. While leaders of state argue where they will go, they suffer the despair of the dispossessed whom no one on the globe offers a welcome.

The anxiety and hopelessness were spread over many lands. In the political chaos, no one has known how to start adequate governments again. Economic security will never exist again during the lives of many. War's path of destruction was marked by the collapse of all the things that had once given people confidence. A correspondent of the New York *Times* wrote from Poland: "As you travel around the country it is difficult to encounter anyone who was not in a concentration camp, or had immediate relatives killed or imprisoned, or compatriots ruthlessly slain before his eyes."[1] This is the despair that America can scarcely imagine.

Still the uncountable cost has not been counted. Perhaps the third great cost will be the worst. *For it seems some-*

[1] Issue of November 7, 1945.

times that even the ideals of civilized men must be written among the casualties of the war. We did not say this time that we were fighting a war that would end wars. Yet, it seemed, we might have hoped for something better than this. Months after the official end of the war, any day's newspaper listed troubles—fighting and bloodshed, starvation, riots, violent social discontent and unrest—in a dozen parts of the world, in the major portions of the inhabited globe. No wonder one man said: "Even in the worst fighting, I had the feeling that it could be worth while. But when I see the way the world is going, I wonder whether it is all a miserable farce."

The threatening thought cannot be escaped: perhaps victory was only the starting point for worse destruction to come. The United Nations show little unity. In the bargaining at conference tables where rulers of nations meet, there is little thought of the ideals and hopes of men. The end of the war brought the vision of destruction beyond our dreams. We wonder. War was bound to shatter some hopes. But must we bury hope itself? No one can yet know how many of our hopes and ideals must be entered as casualties of the Second World War.

What Does It Mean?

We have looked at the cost—the part of it which we can understand. What is the upshot of it all? Must we look in vain for a meaning? The haunting line of the hymn flashes again and again through the mind: "Age after age their tragic empires rise." One thinks of the long history of man upon earth. For centuries the mighty empires of Egypt and Assyria struggled. Alternately the armies of the Asian and African powers swept across the great fertile crescent that joined them, as first one, then the other empire drove to the borders of its rival. Men died in those battles as

heroically and as reluctantly as men died in 1945. Women wept as poignantly then as now for husbands who did not return. The innocent suffered the terrors of war as bitterly then as now.

Yet nothing remains of those struggles. Nothing, that is, except the voices of a few prophets in a tiny land between the great empires, a land so insignificant that it was often not even listed in the records of the proud conquests of emperors. They were men who saw their country overrun by one or the other of the huge armies. They had little notion of the importance of these great imperialisms or of what their rivalry meant to the mighty kings, who made this little land the victim of their conflicts. But somehow they were certain that they heard the word of God. Somehow they discerned His majesty in terrible events of history. The words of these prophets live today and still show God to men. Ancient pyramids and walled cities are vainglorious relics of dead civilization. But Israel's Bible is still alive.

So perhaps we can find, in the struggles of our day, something that will strike into our hearts with reality. Probably the answer will not be obvious. Probably it will not be what we want to hear. But we cannot stop asking. We have looked at the cost of war. Is there nothing here but the rise and fall of tragic empires? Is this all that is meant by this tremendous effort? Or is God to be found somewhere in all the destruction? The question is urgent. It comes from men who were taught to love their enemies and who learned to kill them. It comes from people who believed that God loved them, but saw friends or husbands killed by the cruel impersonal hand of war. This is our problem. We have to search the answer.

Before we start our search, let us stop once more to remember. For immediately, this cost must mean something. It must have shouted to us that our freedom and opportunity

are the costliest things we have. It is an awesome thing, when we try to think how we will use them. Terror and gratitude are mixed when we see our place in this world that we face. The one thing we cannot do is take our opportunity for granted. This America, this world with the opportunities that it gives us amid the ruins, was paid for by many who died and many who still live in misery. We have blessings that we cannot accept without thought. We are the heirs of gifts that we can never pay for. Only the brutal soul will accept them without prayer. Only the heartless will forget. "Lord God of Hosts, Be with us yet, Lest we forget."

Chapter II

The Clash of War and Christian Faith

THE BELIEFS IN PEOPLE'S HEADS have a lot to do with events; the Nazis proved that. Events have a lot to do with what people believe; the war proved that. What men do and what men believe, though they may not always agree, are always connected.

In one of the brief rests after a long battle in Europe, some officers were talking about what they would do after the war. Long afterwards one of the lieutenants told me about it: "I'll never forget the captain's look when I said that I was going either into a political movement that would do something to end wars, or into some kind of religious work. Until then I guess he had thought I was a pretty normal fighter. He was surprised for a minute, and then said, 'I used to be religious, but I've seen too much of life.' "

Millions of others, at home or abroad, had their minds changed by what they saw of life and history. The shell that rips the armor of a tank does something to the minds of men who ride in tanks. Just as truly, a historical eruption that tears apart the structure of civilization does something to the thoughts of people who live in the civilization.

When events and beliefs collide, as they have so often in our decade, something has to happen. In this chapter we shall look at the blow which was struck at the beliefs of Christians, and simply record what has happened. In the following chapters we shall think about what these Christian beliefs have come to mean in a time which has seen such a war.

The Collision

The clash of reality and ideas was bitter. Something went wrong. This was the time in history that was supposed to bring peace and understanding. Scientific knowledge was broadening mutual interests and strengthening the ties between men. Justice, which had once been limited to the tribe and then to the nation, was expected to govern relations between the nations, who had agreed to outlaw war. But the world community, instead of growing, exploded.

Did this also explode the beliefs of Christians? To some extent it certainly did. It seemed to some as though the events of our time hit Christian beliefs like a tornado striking a town, leaving nothing but wreckage and a few hopes standing bravely but futilely in the midst of the destruction. Thoughtful minds asked the poignant question: "What has happened to *my* hopes? What am I living for?"

This, we shall see, is not the whole story. But it is true enough to clear away some false ideas that have got abroad. Someone in the Pacific coined a dramatic phrase and soon it was repeated across the country that "there are no atheists in foxholes." Others told of special cases of impressive services in the field, and talk got around about a revival of religion in the army. Still others assumed that because men took the New Testaments offered by the chaplains, these men also read them and were concerned with Christianity. It looked fine to see newspaper articles about this turn toward religion on the battlefields. But probably few people were fooled. The facts were too obvious. War is not the atmosphere to encourage ideals. It makes men cruel and hard. Beside every time—and there were some—when a bit of holy light flashed into the murk of war, there were many when the smoke of conflict seemed to blot out God.

The evidence is everywhere. Look *first* at plain morality. Less than three months after victory, 165 ex-service men of

World War II were serving sentences at Sing Sing. This, said the prison officials, followed the pattern of every great war. Moscow, London, and New York reported spectacular crime waves. The disruption of normal social and family life brought the disintegration of social morality. Let it be remembered that the issue of fraternization with the defeated Germans was argued less on grounds of political wisdom than on the desire of soldiers for sexual intercourse with German women.

Second, look at the church. A few years before the war started, the worldwide church was becoming a gradually stronger realization of an ideal of Christian unity. War made unity, as an organizational thing, almost impossible, and created animosities that will make unity more difficult in the future. In many a land there could be no honest preaching of Christianity. Tyrants made puppets of the church, or tried to destroy it. Weak Christians yielded to threats and punishments; strong ones went to concentration camps or died. Dictators made an effective church impossible, and often killed the leaders who might strengthen it now.

Third, look at Christian faith itself. Often it seemed that the axe of war, as it hacked at the church, was striking the very roots of faith. The sight of the world locked in death-struggle, and the participation in the destruction, have convinced many a man that religious faith is an illusion, or at best an ideal with no relevance to the world where we live. There were actually chaplains who lost their faith during the fighting. What must have been happening to the man for whom Christianity was a rather vague belief at best? We may not hear much of outspoken rejections of Christianity, but probably many a man for whom Christianity was never very real has returned from the war to find its meaning more vague, and its relevance to the problems of human life more questionable.

All this was part of what happened in the collision of reality and ideas. It brought a violent shock to many a man. Such a shock, however, might not be entirely bad. For many Christians it took no war to prove the falsehood of the theme that "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world." But for those whose Christianity was mainly a sort of spiritualized optimism, war pronounced that it was a mistake to think that the world was steadily improving. It was a fallacy to expect that good would win over bad in the long run, simply by waiting. It was foolish to believe that men were incapable of the worst barbarisms of bygone ages. It was stupid to think that America could escape trouble by looking the other way and thinking that things would turn out all right. Too many of these beliefs had been associated with Christianity. Insofar as these were the Christian beliefs of our time, it was just as well that war got rid of them.

Christian Faith and Crisis

There is, of course, a different Christian faith, a faith closer to the Bible and the greatest traditions of the church. It knows that God does not guarantee success to the things we want. It knows that evil forces may overpower the good, that no program, however good, is sure of success. Yet it is a faith that the God of Jesus Christ is, in the end, the ruler of history, and that it is His will that matters most regardless of the conflict of force against force. This will of God is the one inescapable thing in life. However wretched life may be, it makes demands upon us; it judges us; and it makes life worthwhile. This faith was never weakened by the blows of war.

Indeed, in *one* sense, the war set an atmosphere that Christianity recognizes better than that of the peacetime twentieth century. For Christianity is a religion of *crisis*. Its Jewish heritage, its birth and development were marked

by crisis. Its great insights and great hopes have come from times of crisis. So true has this been that Christianity has often created its own crises; it has set itself in opposition to easy ways of living. The real danger to Christianity comes when men become complacent and think that things around them are satisfactory. How could such a faith fear the blows of war? Of course Christians do not need war and destruction to prove their faith. But insofar as war demands courage, heroism, suffering for an ideal, it can evoke the "faith of our fathers" better than a comfortable life.

Hitler had no respect for Christianity. "I could destroy the Church in a few years," he said in 1933. "It is hollow and false and rotten through and through."[1] But after Hitler tried, he found that there was something in the Christian faith that he had not reckoned with. Albert Einstein, the great Jewish scientist, pronounced a verdict:

> Being a lover of freedom when a revolution came in Germany, I looked to the universities to defend it, knowing that they had always boasted of their devotion to the cause of truth; but, no, the universities immediately were silenced. Then I looked to the great editors of the newspapers whose flaming editorials in days gone by had proclaimed their love of freedom; but they, like the universities, were silenced in a few short weeks. . . .
>
> Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing truth, I never had any special interest in the Church before, but now I feel a great affection and admiration because the Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual truth and moral freedom. I am forced thus to confess that what I once despised I now praise unreservedly.[2]

It may be that Einstein praises the church more than is its due. The weakness of the German church was that it

[1] Quoted in *Time,* Dec. 25, 1944.
[2] Quoted in *Time,* Dec. 20, 1940.

was not sufficiently concerned with social and political justice. It was slow to rise in protest against the wickedness of Nazism, until the church itself was attacked. But it is not for us in America to judge a church that has suffered for its faith. The great fact is that some Christians in Germany, in the time of crisis, found the meaning of their faith. Now from men released from prisons come messages that shame our complacent religion.

Perhaps this crisis does not apply directly to American Christianity. No one has had to rise up in America to pronounce the Christian truth against a hostile government that would retaliate by torturing him and perhaps his family. Involved though we were in a world crisis that called for the most intense living of our faith, yet American Christians seldom seemed to face the crisis *as Christians*.

Some demonstrated courage as conscientious objectors, by standing against the crowd to uphold their conception of Christianity. They may have risked health or life by volunteering for dangerous medical experiments. This was a Christian witness. But it was not the crisis of faith against a tyranny that exalted itself and destroyed its foes.

Others, more in number, carried their Christian faith into the conflict. They fought. It took courage, but not necessarily Christian courage. They fought as Americans, beside many others who fought only for patriotism, or only because they had to. They were going with the crowd, though their reasons were not the crowd's.

This made it seem as though Christianity had little to do with their part in the war. Yet in a sense this intensified the meaning of the crisis for faith. Christians fought because of their faith, but not for their faith. Because they believed in Truth, they offered their lives for causes that were less than the Truth. Granted, going into war with a strong army takes little of the courage demanded of the German Christian who stood alone against his own government. Nevertheless, for those with a faith and those who thought, the

war brought something of the sense of crisis so well known to Christian history. They were forced to struggle with the warped facts of history, to make their faith clear, and carry it into the crisis. They learned anew the cost of faith and at least something of the meaning of Christ for suffering struggling men.

Such Christians will understand the story of one of the heroes of the Norwegian church, Bishop Berggrav. With other Norwegian bishops in 1941 he wrote to all the churches of Norway a letter denouncing the terror and violence of Norway's conquerors. Though police and Storm Troopers were posted in every church that Sunday, the message was read or distributed as a pamphlet to the congregations.[3] Later imprisoned for his opposition to the Nazi conquerors and the Quisling State, it is said that he won over his own guards and gained sufficient freedom that he could slip out at night to meetings of the leaders of the underground church. "God's peace," said he, "is not something finished and done with . . . not ours to keep forever. The peace is won by accompanying God into the battle. It is then that it grows, becomes new and real. It is in battle we feel the peace."[4]

It was not simply the "battle" of wars that Bishop Berggrav meant. He meant the battle that is part of the very existence of Christianity. It is a battle greater even than the tremendous Second World War. But in the war, some Christians felt again the sense of crisis that is part of the destiny of the Christian faith.

Two Directions

Let us try to size up the situation. Most Americans met the war with some sort of conventional religious belief. But no conventional belief was adequate to take the shock of

[3] New York *Times,* Feb. 20, 1941.
[4] *Time,* Dec. 15, 1944.

this war and what it meant in the breakdown of our civilization. For many, who did not think, it made little difference. But those who thought about it had to move, and they might go in one of two directions.

Going the *first* direction, they might realize that their conventional beliefs were not realistic, and scrap them. These people might decisively reject their old beliefs, or perhaps unconsciously drift away from them, since they never had meant much. They might aim to get along in this harsh world without any illusions.

Others, going the *second* direction, might see the weakness of conventional beliefs and therefore start asking questions. They might ask why all this is going on, and what the purpose of it can be. *Why* is a religious question. When men ask *why,* they are on the way to a deeper answer.

Both of these directions have been common as Americans have met the crises of our age. They have been especially evident among Americans overseas. The men who took the first direction never did get much of a sense of purpose in the war. They never saw beyond the desire to win and get home. With victory, they turned to looting and sexual indulgence. Thoughtful Germans, recognizing their country's guilt, admitted that war criminals should be tried; but looking at the conduct of the occupation armies, they asked, "Who is fit to judge us?" A survey taken by the American army after six months of occupation revealed a growing bitterness of the Germans against the Americans. Most of this bitterness was directed not against official policies, but against the conduct of our army.[5]

The men who took the second direction went a very different way. They found themselves, perhaps for the first time in their lives, in a position where their own most important actions were not aimed at their own welfare. The big pur-

[5] New York *Times,* Dec. 3, 1945.

poses that they were involved in had nothing to do with them as individuals. They found themselves suffering and sometimes dying. They felt themselves asking what it is about life that makes a person understand that there are purposes more important than himself.

In sharing common hardships and dangers, men found a new sense of brotherhood. In those intense moments when a man confronts death, or when he sees the wickedness of evil laid bare, he may get a new evaluation of things. Sometimes a man knew his squad was in danger, and went to his death to protect the others. The War Department's citations for gallantry are filled with events like that. At other times the whole squad would risk itself to save one man who was wounded or in a dangerous spot. These men were living religiously, though some of them did not know the name of God except in an oath. They were finding a new depth of life, though they might never associate it with the church.

There is a curious contrast between these two directions. The strangest thing about it is that many men went in both directions. Many a man has returned to America after acting both more nobly and more disgracefully than he had ever acted before. Life's intense experiences not only divide the "sheep" from the "goats." Usually they show up the "sheep" and the "goat" in each man.

Yet it is significant that some men, taking the second direction, have come to the threshold of Christianity, though they may never know it because there are few in the church to pronounce the faith clearly and boldly. But the faith is there and some have found it, or have rediscovered its reality.

Christian faith has taken the blows delivered it by the war. Severe though they were, they were nothing new. Christians know that "the peace that passeth understanding" is the possession of those who know the Lord who came bringing "not peace but a sword." They know that "the

church is an anvil which has worn out many hammers." They know, in crisis and turmoil as truly as in easier times, that God's claim is the one claim that cannot be shaken, that God is the One Who matters.

Chapter III

Meeting Death and Suffering

"IT'S STRANGE HOW MUCH MEN WANT TO LIVE."

I was talking to a chaplain during the "Battle of the Bulge." For three tremendous days my company had been battling the Germans, who kept coming toward us, between us, and around us. Human mind and body kept driving, driving to the limits of endurance, then driving more because there was nothing else to do. Now for a moment, before the third sleepless night, I relaxed near the battalion command post, where I was getting orders from the colonel. Crowding my mind were a hundred burning impressions —pictures of men acting with incredible courage, of flaming tanks and thundering artillery, of soldiers firing rifles and throwing grenades and killing Germans. But as I stopped for a second to talk to the chaplain, one thought emerged: "It's strange how much men want to live."

These men were making a wonderful fight. I had thrilled to their courage, to the calm way they acted under fire. So many of them faced death heroically. Yet, they wanted so much to live.

Why was this? An insect, when a man swats it, refuses to die. It lies on the ground, quivering wings and legs reaching out, as it struggles to move and its body persists in the hopeless effort to keep living. But men are not like this. I was not impressed by a biological will to survival. It was something in the minds of these men.

We all feared death. But it was not physical fear. Torn and burning flesh, painful masses of blood and mangled muscles—these are awful sights. But men do not think of pain and horror when they face death. It is what Ernie

Pyle called "almost desperate reluctance to give up the future." In the moments when we felt death near, glimpses of the future flashed through our minds. It was anticipation of home, of those we loved, of things we hoped to do—these we did not want to surrender. *It is the human imagination and the human spirit that make a man want to live.*

That is why it is so important what a man believes. For men under fire are not so much biological as spiritual. They have muscles and nerves, it is true, like an animal. But in everything they do, there is spirit and imagination. The man warrior is both more generous and more fearful of death, both more cruel and more generous than the lion. And because he is not a lion, and cannot lose his imagination and spirit, he suffers neuroses, he longs to finish the war and go home, and he gives himself to the battle with a heroism that thrills other men.

Let us look at this strange intense feeling that comes to men when they confront the end of their lives. Why is it that we cannot accept casually this thing that comes to everyone? Once in a while we see someone who tries to act as though it were not important. Pierre Laval, the traitor of Vichy, sentenced to death for his treason, talked that way. In prison with him was another collaborator who was taken out for execution a few days before Laval.

"Don't worry," the former Premier said. "It lasts only a few seconds and you can tell yourself it's just like being killed in a bus accident on the Place de l'Opera."

Yes, you can tell yourself that, Monsieur Laval. But you cannot make yourself believe it. You did not believe it when you fought with such brilliant mind and immoral spirit in the courtroom where you got the sentence of death. There is something in a man that makes your words unconvincing.

Laval's advice, in a sense, is logical enough. If man is nothing but an animal with intelligence, and death is only the end of existence, there should be nothing about death to

dread or fear. The few moments of pain anyone can stand. If the pleasures of life end, what is that to a corpse that knows nothing of pleasure or pain? A few years more or less makes little difference one way or the other. If pleasure and pain are stopped sooner than they might have been, that is nothing, for pleasure and pain cannot even know that they are ended, and something that does not live can have no regrets.

But this does not ring true. This is not what happens. A man is not simply a bundle of pleasure and pain sensations. He is a *being* who knows pleasure and pain. It is this *being,* this man, who cannot be casual when he thinks of death. This being has imagination and vision. His spirit shows him things that make him want to live, and make him reluctant "to give up the future."

Two Strains in Man's Spirit

This spirit of man is something that we never quite understand. Many times in this decade it has amazed us by the terrible things it has done. It has been more cruel and fanatic than we believed possible. But again it has risen to heights of courage and sacrifice that have made us marvel.

Two different strains mingle in the spirit of a man. One is the part of a man's spirit that looks outside and beyond himself for the things that make life worth living. "We are such stuff as dreams are made of." It is what Christianity calls "the image of God." This is part of what it is that makes life so full of meaning, beyond the mere pleasures or pains of the moment, that we cling to it.

The other strain is something very different. It too has imagination and vision. But it is the part of a man that leads him to put himself at the center of his existence. In this strain of man's spirit, it is as if he himself were the purpose of his life. This is not mere ignorance, as it is in an animal

which is conscious of its own desires but can know nothing of life beyond itself or its pack. This egoism is part of human beings who know that they are only individuals among a multitude of individuals, but who yet think of the world in terms of themselves. Something like this is what Christianity means when it talks of sin.

These two strains are mingled in a man, so that nothing he does is independent of either. Think of egoism gone mad, as it was in Hitler. This was not the cruelty of an animal. It was intense glorifying of the self, mingled with an imagination that exalted it until it seemed to Hitler himself to be the destiny of a nation that he was serving. On the other hand, think of men in their noblest visions. Even here, this consciousness of the importance of oneself is always part of a man. Psychologists tell us how much egoism has to do with our "good" motives. And in the most sacrificial actions, a man cannot escape the concern with himself and his own life.

This, then, is the man who must face death and suffering. He is a spirit, of two mingled strains. If he were something less than he is, he would not fear death. He would make only the fight for survival, like the insect or the animal. But because he is transformed by this double strain of spirit from the biological creature, he sees great things to live for, yet cannot see the vision of those things apart from himself.

How does this apply to men who must face death? It means that a man cannot live for himself alone, nor can he live entirely for an ideal beyond himself. So a man in battle is both courageous and reluctant to die.

It is rare for a man to be cowardly in battle. Often men's courage is superb. And this courage is part of what men believe. Put aside, for the moment, ideas of formal religion. By belief, I mean the most real, inner beliefs of a man, whatever he calls them. Usually they are never formed in sentences or even in thoughts. But every man in battle,

unless an utter gambler or defeatist, has some faith that impels him. Maybe he cannot let his comrades down. Maybe cowardice is worse than death. Maybe he feels the violent urge to avenge a murdered friend. Maybe it has something to do with self-respect, or the faith of others in him, or patriotism. Something, consciously or not, is that man's God and drives him on. It makes him willing to risk death rather than quit.

Faith Is Something That Lives

Sometimes we wonder what Christianity has to do with these faiths that actually move men. It would be hard to find much relation between church-going and courage in war. The trouble is that we think of religion in too formal terms. A soldier in the Pacific made a typical remark to Maurice Evans, the Shakespearean actor. He said that he thought Shakespeare was something like religion; everyone agrees that it is good, and lets it go at that.

But this is not faith in God. Faith is not simply acceptance of a traditional belief, and God is not just something the church talks about. Something is of final, inescapable importance for a man; that something—good or bad—is, for him, God. Martin Luther put it superbly: "Whatever, then, thy heart clings to, I say, and relies upon, that is properly thy God."[1] When God is this, faith must be alive. Men have many gods, Luther knew, and few men have faith in the One God. For faith, thus understood, cannot be a matter for Sundays, or one interest among life's many interests. It is the center of life, or it is no faith.

A young officer, a few months out of college, once told me, "I used to be an atheist, but I'm not any more. I have talked to God three times," and he mentioned three times when he thought he might die.

[1] *Greater Catechism,* Commentary on the First Commandment.

I wanted to say, "So what?"

It would have been rude, but honest. For this God of emergencies is no God. This man might almost as well have talked to the bombs or bullets that threatened his life.

If it is God whom a man talks to in a crisis, that man cannot stop talking to God when the crisis is over. I do not say that men cannot find God in a crisis. For in certain supreme moments, we see the truth most clearly. But *usually* a man will not find God in an emergency unless he knew God before. And certainly, if he "talks to God" when the bullets fly, forgets Him until they fly again, talks and forgets, and talks and forgets, his talking amounts to little.

This is the trouble with talk about religion "in foxholes." A man will seldom find God in a foxhole. And if he does, he will not leave God in the foxhole when he comes out. For God in a foxhole is not God unless He is the God of a man's life.

War tests a man's faith. If the faith is less than thoroughly honest, a matter of vain repetitions, or only a superstition, war will find it out. If it is shallow, a group of conventional beliefs, or only a habit, war will destroy it. For war is one of those times—like any great time of sorrow, or decision, or temptation—when man's spirit stretches out to its heights and its depths. Pretense is unmasked and life laid bare. Then faith is destroyed, or faith becomes real.

When Faith Is Christian

We are concerned now with what the Christian message, when it is a real faith, says to men who face death or suffering. Christianity, if it is any religion at all, must strengthen men to meet the guns, or suffering, or whatever the world gives to those who live by their faiths. Any sort of a belief will give a man some sort of strength, to the extent that he makes that belief the purpose of his life. But Christianity

is not just a psychology; it has a content—a message for men.

To begin with—let it be absolutely clear—a Christian knows, if he is not superstitious, that his religion does not insure his survival or a pleasant life. He does not count on God to keep him alive, or to keep suffering away from him. How many men, in the inarticulate prayer that they make in battle, have had this mistaken faith that somehow their God might protect them from the destruction that was falling on all sides! But whatever Christianity may do to answer despair or to save men in their suffering, it does not set a man on the pathway of safety and comfort. True, there were writers in the Bible, as there have been people in many churches, who thought that the good man was protected by God from suffering. But the Bible rises to a higher level when it tells us that the faithful do suffer. And in its grandest conceptions of suffering—in the Old Testament poems of the Suffering Servant of the Lord, and in the New Testament story of the Cross—it proclaims that the faithful must suffer just because they are faithful. If any seek for a religion that will shield them, they had better look elsewhere.

Christianity has a long history of plunging men into trouble. A group of Jewish fishermen, on the day when they met Jesus, started careers that carried them into more danger and conflict and suffering than they would ever have found if they had stayed with their fishing. So it has always been for men who have met the Lord. Yet this strange Christian faith, as it rings from the writings of the turbulent men of the New Testament, has become known as a glorious faith. The reason is that Christianity says some definite things to men who accept suffering or their own destruction in the name of their faith.

The Christian message answers man's troubled question with a *No* and a *Yes*. It says *No* to all of the hopes and aspirations that man weaves about his own existence and his own personality. It says *Yes* to the visions of man that

finds the purpose of life in something greater than himself and beyond himself.

This is not an easy faith. The *No* is pronounced against most of what men find real and important. The *Yes* refers to something that is usually not very real to us. Yet there is something in the spirit of a man that responds to this *Yes,* and that realizes that the most real things are not the ones that seem so obvious.

Christianity is a blunt affirmation that life-for-its-own-sake is of minor importance. The important thing about living can never be measured in the days and years of existence. The man who seeks to find his life by preserving it will surely lose it. This whole ego of man, this strain of his nature that looks at the entire world in its importance for the one man who is looking—this is not only mistaken, it is wrong. So Christianity comes to men who tremble for themselves and tells them ruthlessly that they are not important. But strangely, this is not devaluation of life. This is not the cruel arithmetic of war that cares nothing for the destruction of individuals as long as the line moves forward on the map. Commanders in battle must deal in these harsh calculations. In the brutal confusion of combat, an officer picks up his field telephone, calls a subordinate commander, and asks how many casualties he has had. If he gets the answer that only a few have been killed, he says, "Good." This is cruel. I know because I have done it. I said, "Good." I was glad when the percentage of losses was low, because the logic of war demands that we think that way. There is no place then for thoughts of individuals. One man does not count, when so many are destroyed.

But this is *not* what Christianity says. It says that its denial of the worth of life-in-itself is not a devaluation but an exaltation of man. The reason is that man, in his very nature, is meant to live for something more than himself. It is not just life, but what a man lives for, that is important.

A man may die in battle when he is twenty years old and we may know that he had a glorious life and death; while another may die in bed at eighty and end a miserable life. Of course, the exact reverse can be true. Men have died in battle at the end of miserable, defeated lives; and others have reached in bed the end of a victorious life. The length of life or the manner of death is not important. The quality of life and its purpose are what make life matter. So Christ told his disciples: "He that findeth his life shall lose it and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

At this point, Christianity seems sometimes to get unrealistic and to lose itself in the clouds. A good many people who can go along with some of the ideals of Christian teaching have to get off the train when it comes to this point. And many more, including perhaps most of the people in churches, will accept this as a more or less poetical idea, or even as a beautiful truth, but will proceed to live as though they had never heard of it.

But this is not a postscript to Christianity. It is not one of the fine points that can be taken or left. It is at the very center of the faith, one of the living truths that give life and meaning to all the rest that Christianity has to say. If you leave it out, what you have left is no longer Christianity.

The Realism of Faith

How realistic is it? Some men have had it hit them with new force when they came to the point of their own destruction. At such a crisis of life, they have found that a living faith was the only thing that could give meaning to the whole muddled mess.

Let us be absolutely honest. Right at this point, it is easy to get tied up in words. It would not be true to jump to the conclusion that men come to a Christian faith in the crisis that threatens their lives. As we have said before, most men

do not. Soldiers gave a cynical laugh to talk of risking lives for an ideal, and said that they would leave that for the newspapers and the politicians to talk about. It is not ideals, but *motivations* that drive men. In these motivations, the central problem of life asserts itself.

We have noted how men, as they become involved in the battles where life is at stake, find that after all it is something other than life that is *the* stake. Then, when of all times reality is real, they find that they cannot center everything on preserving themselves. This human being, thought of as a man-for-the-sake-of-himself-alone, is worthless. Something has to give that man purpose. Something makes him courageous and sends him out to risk his life.

Obviously, the *something* that impels a man to put courage ahead of safety is not necessarily faith in the Christian God. Usually it is not. Most often it is a motivation that mixes the ego and the nobility that we have seen in men. This is the tragic element in the faith of men. It is not that man is utterly concerned with himself. It is that he is shaken out of himself by a faith and a motivation, but this faith is less than faith in the Christian God.

Much was said, early in the war, about the faith of Nazism. For Nazism was a faith—far more vigorous than the Christian faith as it usually found expression in America. The Nazi faith, like the Christian faith, taught that there was a purpose to life greater than simply living. It gave men something to live and die for, and did it with a power that shook the globe. If we regard it psychologically, it performed the same function that a vivid Christian faith can perform—directed, of course, to its own ends.

Nazism did not simply deny Christian faith; it set up a counter-faith. Its followers believed that it was better to die with a vision than to live without it. But their vision, unlike the Christian one, was egoistic. It was the enlarged, bloated ego—the ego of the exalted group, who in their

fanatical faith would conquer and destroy everyone who opposed them.

This is the realism of faith. When Christ says, "He that findeth his life shall lose it," the devotees of a hundred faiths agree. All the intense moments of life shout at us that we cannot find life in ourselves. The fanatic, sure of his faith, agrees. The normal, puzzled American, who wants desperately to live, yet has the courage to face destruction for some motivation, agrees. I-for-the-sake-of-myself am not enough.

But when Christ says, "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it," then men are not so sure. They disagree, or they say, "Yes, but—." This motivation that exalts a man by giving him a purpose for his life completely beyond his ego—this is too much. Yes, it is. We are not capable of it. In our purest yearnings, we do not escape ourselves, or the strain in ourselves that tries to make self our God. Yet, is not Christ true? Is not his faith the only one that can endure?

We have looked at the Nazi faith and have seen how powerful it was. Today we can see what happens to such a faith when it crumbles. A dispatch in the New York *Times* says:

> German youth is disillusioned, tired, confused and visibly growing more and more demoralized. Accustomed for twelve years to complete subservience to the Nazi ideal, no longer capable of finding guidance and strength within itself nor willing to accept it at the hands of family or church, German youth is floundering in a morass of hatred and cynicism from which it will be hard to save it.
>
> The majority of young people in Germany today believe in nothing. . . .
>
> Typical of the extent to which cynicism has developed in some of these German boys between the ages of 14 and 20 was a remark made the other day by a 17-year-old apprentice mechanic who said bitterly, "I envy those who can still believe

something—yes, even those who retain their faith in Hitler. At least they have something to hold on to. I have nothing, nothing." [2]

We can ask why the Nazi faith crumbled so. Obviously, one reason is that the Nazis lost the war. But we can go further, and say that no such faith can sustain itself. Any faith in the institutions of men must perish in the end, because no institution lasts forever. More important, any faith in men themselves must perish because men are not good enough to believe in forever. When we put our belief in men —in ourselves—we finally get sick of ourselves. Then we have to despair. Or we look to God who alone is worthy of faith. So we come again to Christ: "He who loses his life for my sake shall find it." Nothing less will do. Everything less is inadequate. When life tries to find a lesser God than the God of Christ, it ends in despair.

This is why Christianity gives hope to men. When it says *No* to so much that a man wants, it is saying *Yes* to the one thing that will answer his deepest need. This is why men can face trouble with strength in the Christian faith. This is the faith that is power because it is truth.

Again let us be absolutely honest. Do men really have such a faith? Can they actually face suffering as though it were victory? Honesty starts at home, and I will make my admissions. I never ceased to fear death. I never stopped shuddering when shells and bombs came near, or hoping that somehow I would survive. I never forgot myself—this *self* that plagues all our thoughts and emotions. For our human faith is a weak and trembling thing. Yet it is a triumphant thing. It makes it possible for a man to have courage in spite of himself and his fears. It is victory.

There is a great witness in the Christian tradition to the *power* of faith. This witness of men's hearts is the only

[2] Magazine Section, Sunday *Times,* Nov. 25, 1945.

proof we have of the *truth* of faith; for there is no geometrical theorem to convince anyone who does not believe. But the New Testament and the history of the church throb with the power of men who in their fear of the judgment of God mastered their fear of men, and who in their love for Him overcame their love for other things. This is the only hope that does not give up to time and cynicism. It knows that "perfect love casteth out fear." It rises to triumph in the cry, "If God is for us, who can be against us!" It makes the fearful man a hero with the certainty of Luther's hymn: "The body they may kill; God's truth abideth still." It is the hope made real in the courage of men who did give their lives to Christ and so found him.

When Others Suffer

All this, of course, is not something that comes just naturally or easily. But sometimes it seems as if we begin to understand this power that lifts us up as it says *No* to so much that we want. Yet there will always be a time when it seems like a hard thing. That is when we see someone else suffer, or watch another's life snuffed out.

Many a man got used to fighting a war. He got used to facing a future where the gods of chance seemed to rule. He knew that any day might be his last, and he ceased to worry about it or to shrink from danger. But he never got so that he could take for granted the suffering of a friend. He could never quite get used to the deaths of others. And steeled though he was to whatever might happen, there was usually some one person, or maybe a few, who would come into his thoughts and make him wince. He could not quite bear the idea that something should happen to them.

There were soldiers who had courage aplenty in their own right, but when they heard of the death of a brother, had to stop and cry. There were others who could bring

themselves to stand whatever might come, but could not bear the thought of a family left at home without a father.

Perhaps some one goes through the conflict, takes his chances with the rest, and has the courage to meet it all. When it is over, he comes home. Then some day he meets the wife or mother of some one who did not come home. Then he feels the pain that no amount of courage can quiet.

That is the trouble with courage in itself as an answer to suffering. For those who try to make themselves strong enough to face whatever life deals out to them, it may sometimes seem adequate. But when it comes face to face with the suffering of others, it is either hard and pompous, or it breaks.

A young marine officer—an athlete, student, and superb leader—died invading a Pacific island. One impersonal shell ended a life that had promised much. His death was more than his mother and father could stand. They became bitter. What could anyone say to them?

A soldier left his young wife when he went to Europe. The war was almost over, people said, and he would not get in the fighting. But the Germans attacked when they were supposed to retreat, and this soldier was thrown in to help fill the gap. He died in the Ardennes, and almost before his first letter home came the War Department's telegram. The wife was tearful, bewildered. Who could dare try to comfort her?

A Christian minister saw his son go off to war. Probably among his congregations, this minister had comforted hundreds of people in his lifetime. But it was different when he got the notice that his son had been "killed in action." The words that he had spoken to others before had no meaning now for him. He became bitter, and could not endure preaching. What were words now?

In a sense it is always presumptuous to try to help heal someone else's sorrows. How can anyone comfort another,

when he does not know what that other one is suffering? And no matter what one has experienced himself, he never really knows what another is suffering, because each man's sufferings are his own.

Yet there is an answer, and it does not have to come out of us. People in generations before us have found comfort, just as some are finding it today. Isn't the answer the same one that we have been talking about—this Christian message that says both *No* and *Yes* to our thoughts and our hopes? Life means something because God gives it a meaning, because men can live for something greater than themselves. Would the young marine have been a greater man, simply by living out the war, coming home, and perhaps building up a successful business? Would he have achieved anything more than he did by giving his life so courageously? Certainly an extra fifty years of living would not have made his life worth more in the sight of God. For his parents it will be hard to understand. But is it not true?

The young wife grieves for her husband, and we, unless we are crude and hard, will sorrow with her. He has given up life. Both of them have given up the joys and possibilities of life together. Can she understand that in losing his life, it is possible that he found it? Can she understand that in facing the rest of her life alone, she too is bearing part of the terrible cost of wrong, and can in this very thing come closer to God? If so, she has heard and felt the power of the Christian God.

All this may sound cruel. To those who know nothing of the Gospel, it will be cruel. This ruthless denial of the importance of life, this *No* pronounced against many of the hopes that we think are the best in life—it cannot be anything but cruel. Some men who heard Jesus thought that He was too cruel. But others found in Him a Savior. Only those who begin to see to the heart of His message can understand the great *Yes* that He gives to men.

For some people, suffering and death can be nothing but cruelty. If a man dies with no sort of a vision, if he faces death grudgingly and only because he has to, then his destruction is in no sense a sacrifice. It is only an accident. There is no meaning in it for him or those around him. How would you comfort anyone who loved Hitler?

A group of newspapermen talked to Heinrich Himmler's wife after his death. They did not try to say anything sympathetic and they hardly could have said it if they had tried. A chaplain could not have done better. There are times when the Christian message only adds cruelty to sorrow.

But those who have felt in some way the power and truth of the Gospel know that it is not cruel. They have accepted what life in its cruelty has given them, and have seen beyond the cruelty. They have, at least at moments, felt what it means that "he who loseth his life for my sake shall find it." They have seen, beyond the *No,* the mighty *Yes.*

Beyond Despair

No one, with Christ or without Him, has found all the answers. Some things will be more than we can understand, regardless of any faith. In fact, there are things that are harder to make logical when we believe than when we do not. So Christians, as they went through the years of history's worst war, and the new despair that came after the war and was sometimes worse than anything in the war, felt painful questionings that were hard to quiet.

How can we understand this awful waste of war's brutality, as it strikes down indiscriminately the best with the worst? What can we make of this bloody historical process, that leaves us after all our sacrifices with an unquiet world, in which fears are worse than before, and there is no promise of peace? The suffering of ourselves, or of our friends, we may come to accept as somehow part of God's way. But does

not the destruction of so much that is good, and the threat to all our dreams, make life meaningless? Where in all this can we see the hand of God?

The question is ancient. It is found on old Babylonian tablets, centuries before the Bible. It has been asked in one form or another wherever men have left records of their beliefs. It has been repeated in the Bible and the history of the church. It comes to each age. In our age it seems to come with a new penetrating power. It is the same question that we have been asking, but it goes a little farther. It asks, not just about the suffering that people endure in history, but about that human history itself, and whether the vast extent of suffering and the cruel destruction of good, does not make that whole history come to naught. It threatens to drive us to a despair that will swallow the hope that Christianity promises to our other questions.

Some men have felt it, not while they were fighting the war, but after they got back. They have thought of the comrades they saw die, and have wondered whether anything could be achieved to justify those deaths. The sharpening rivalries between the great nations and the deepening rifts in men's thinking have brought them closer to despair. Can Christianity give an answer to this?

First, Christianity is not an *explanation.* It does not pretend to be. It has some definite things to say about evil, but it does not explain it. Christian philosophies may try to do so, and as philosophies they may be good or bad. But our purpose now is not to dabble in philosophies. It is to find the answer that meets our life head-on. In passing, we may say one thing about explanations. Although none of them is very complete, it is at least as easy for a Christian philosophy to take account of the negative side of things as for an anti-Christian philosophy to take account of the positive side. (This is particularly true since Christianity affirms that a large part of our suffering comes from the acts

of men who violate God's righteous will.) Christian philosophies may not understand why there is so much of life and history to which God says *No,* but other philosophies have as much trouble in understanding the *Yes.* The noblest visions of life, the faiths in which we see beyond ourselves and our own interests, are as much a part of life as all the rest.

Second, it is useless to come to Christianity as a stranger looking for an answer to suffering and evil. No part of Christianity has an answer. It is the entire Gospel that is the answer. And it is an answer only to those who believe it. You cannot get answers by asking questions from outside. You find them only when you are inside.

This may seem like a perfect example of reasoning in a circle, and in a way it is. It is something like friendship, or love. No one who has never been a friend can critically assess the values of friendship and determine whether it is worthwhile. He cannot even experiment—try it out to see if it works. It is only when he *has* a friend and *is* a friend that he knows what friendship means. Only inside the circle does one learn what it is.

Some soldiers were frank about the reason they went to a religious service before an attack. One said religion was like the life-jacket they gave him when he crossed the Atlantic. He wanted it there if he needed it, but he hoped he would never have to use it. We may hope that he did not have to use his religion, because if he did, he would not find it there. He was still looking in from the outside.

So if people are discouraged and decide to take a look at Christianity to see if it can help them, they usually get no help. God's *Yes* cannot come to those who will not hear his *No.*

But to those who hear the *No* and the *Yes,* Christianity says some very definite things. It starts by facing the issue, not evading it. Christianity does not brush off evil as a

minor thing. One reason that it does not explain it is that it is unwilling to explain it away. The confidence of Jesus Christ and St. Paul was certainly not a result of their underestimating evil. They saw the facts of history as clearly as we do, and knew about all the things that make life seem brutal and meaningless. They saw the universe as a great battlefield of God and the powers of destruction. Just as war shows the terrible destructiveness of wrong, Christianity shows the terrible wickedness of evil.

Not because it minimizes evil, but because it knows another greater power, Christianity claims to conquer evil. The greater power is *God.* Even while the Devil rampages, God is ruler of the world. His claim on us is the one claim we cannot evade. His *Yes* is greater than all the *Noes.*

There is no place for glib answers here. We who are healthy cannot give easy comfort to the wounded who will never have health. If we think we have found God in suffering, we dare not tell this lightly to those whose suffering is more hopeless. Life restrains us. Christianity forbids it. But Christianity says that there is an answer, a true and profound one. Recall Jesus in plain, utter loneliness, the frustration of one who sees events crushing the lofty hopes of a dedicated life. Here Jesus prayed. After that prayer, he said, "Arise, let us be going." God was the answer to anguish. When men turn to God, they find that He has already turned to them. When they seek Him, they realize that He has been seeking them.

"I have overcome the world," says Christ in the Fourth Gospel. He has not explained the world, or done away with evil. He has overcome them. How is it that Christ overcomes the world that crucifies Him? How is it that the Cross, the sign of death and despair, is a victory? Nothing explains it to us. The mystery and the pain are not removed. Yet one certain thing in this central symbol of the Christian faith is that at the center of this struggle between good and

bad, at the very victory of God over evil, is suffering. It reaches to the Divine Himself. But beyond the Cross is Resurrection. Just at the time when the perfect good seems to be destroyed, when the forces that make life meaningless seem to crush out the pitiful weakness that is God's love, at that moment comes the eternal divine *Yes* with a strength that overcomes the evil of the centuries.

Part of the very idea of victory, of course, is the certainty that *death* is not the final word. This is not easy to understand. Perhaps we cannot understand it. Certainly it is not a promise of pie in the sky. It has been interpreted too often by people thinking of their own narrow desires. It does no good to inquire into this unknown future, and let our imaginations toy with what might be. But is not the essence of Christianity always the *No* and the *Yes* that we have seen? Must not death likewise be a *No* to much of what we hold dearest in our obsession with ourselves, but a *Yes* to that which is really ourselves? The final word is St. Paul's: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."[3]

This is the *Yes* of Christianity. It is not a *Yes* to people simply because the world is good. It is not even a *Yes* to people because they try to make it good. It is the *Yes* that everyone realizes, whether he knows it or not, in those moments when he does begin to love God. No merely individual and other-worldly thing, it enters into every moment of life and has consequences for all we do. It centers in a living God, the God who is "more ready to hear than we are to call on Him."

Take evil at its worst. See the hard and cruel hate and

[3] Romans 8:38-39.

destruction that rule men so bitterly, reaching even to the cross of the Son of God. We cannot endure it without painful hearts. But remember too the victories that men have won. Remember how they have taken the worst that evil could give them, have suffered sharp agonies under its cruel blows, and have risen above it after the spirit of Christ. This is just as real as all the rest. This is just as true.

Chapter IV

Inflicting Death and Suffering

"Kill or be killed."

The combat soldier has heard this phrase many a time. Perhaps he first heard it early in his basic training, when a sergeant showed him how to use a bayonet. He probably heard it the last time when he muttered it to himself after he had done a bloody job. In action it seared itself into his mind until it became as automatic as sleeping and eating. This was one of the laws of war. It was one of the laws of human life, when nations fought nations. Over and over its truth was proved. The man who hesitated, who was reluctant or tempted to be merciful, was likely to die at the hands of one who was more ruthless.

Yet this was not the only law of life. There were other laws, even in the most cruel events, that turned men in other directions. There was seldom a time when "kill or be killed" did not have a qualification. To avoid being killed could not be the only motive for killing. If someone would be nothing except a soldier—an efficient fighting machine—he would have to have some purpose beyond being killed. He would have to turn the slogan around; sometimes he would risk being killed in order to kill, because the killing had another purpose. Even more, if one would be not only a soldier but with it *a man,* he could not be content with this simple thought. For we have seen that loyalties move men, and that no one lives or fights simply for the sake of his own survival.

In human nature, survival is one of the powerful motives. But other motives become even more powerful. Certainly

men do not cross oceans and weld together the vast complexes of armies simply to avoid being killed. Something else makes them kill.

Though it is hard and painful to think very seriously in wartime, most people find times when they cannot help but think. And anyone who thinks is bound to think about this killing, and to ask how it can be justified. What is it that makes it right to slaughter people? The question came up again and again for Americans. First they asked whether it was right to go to war at all. Then, after war had come, they asked whether strategic bombing, with its mass killing of civilians, was ethical. After they got used to this, they asked in the last days of war, whether anything could justify the annihilation of a city with an atomic bomb.

To anyone who understands Christianity, the experiencing of suffering is less of a problem than the inflicting of death and suffering. To suffer for a worthy cause is noble; Christianity is clear about that. It may not be easy for us to do it, but the doubt is in ourselves, not in Christianity. But to take the sword and spread death and suffering among others —this is something else. Certainly there is nothing good and noble in killing, in its own right, or in killing simply to avoid being killed.

Before the war, when arguments were common over whether war was ever justifiable, anti-war groups often challenged: Would *you* be willing *to die* for such-and-such a thing? A Christian could answer that of course some things were worth more than his own life. But in the rarer cases when the question was put: Would you be willing *to kill?* —then the answer was not simple. However, America went to war, and killed on a tremendous scale. Now we have finished that, for the present at least, but we still must ask what it means when nations, and Christian people, go out to inflict mass slaughter on their enemies.

The Man Who Does the Killing

Only a small percentage of the men in a war actually see the enemy they kill. The majority, who fire the artillery or release bombs or handle supplies, are just as much a part of the war, but never see an enemy face to face and watch him fall. Perhaps this is all for the good. Or perhaps it would be better if more experienced the vividness of the fighting that involves them all. But all of them are aware that they were spending their days and nights to realize the purpose of destroying an enemy.

It is a big change from the world of peacetime America to the harsh world of "kill or be killed." Some men could not make the change, and went to hospitals when their minds broke. Others made the change, and are staying changed. They cannot get used to a life of peace again. The worst of them are becoming the criminals and mentally sick that we see after every war. Most of them are doing nothing so extreme, but something about them has hardened. The sense of sympathy for other people—never too strong in a privileged country—has been weakened.

We might almost wish that men could react like animals. The army trained thousands of dogs for its combat operations, used them in war, and then retrained them to go back to their civilian owners as friendly pets. Only a few could not make the double change, and had to be destroyed.

With men it is more complicated. We cannot simply get rid of the men who have become killers. Even if we could, we could not determine who those men were. A man is a complex being, and conscious motives mix with unconscious urges in his nature so that we can never say simply that a man is *this* or *that*. A man approaches killing with uneasiness. By the time he is actually in battle, he has heard so much about it that his mind is pretty well conditioned to it. Even then, many men wonder and ask each other what they

think it will feel like the first time they kill a man. When the time actually comes, they do not think about it; the shock of battle overpowers the questioning of the mind.

As they go through their battles, men become hardened. They have to; it is part of fighting. Murdered civilians are an awful sight, at first; no one wants to have anything to do with that. Then they learn that care for enemy civilians often invites death to themselves. If there are a few snipers in an enemy town, it is easier to back up and shell the town than to go through it rooting out the snipers who take their share of our men. So war becomes increasingly ruthless. Respect for human life becomes less and less. Hard facts of time and safety demand quick brute action. Lapses into kindheartedness postpone the end of the war, and often bring more deaths to our side. The man who once felt uneasy about killing an enemy now thinks nothing of seeing a hundred die.

But this is not the whole truth. There were leaders whose ruthless manner covered a deep uneasiness about the cruel orders they had to give. There were actually men in front-line infantry outfits who after the first shock of killing felt a revulsion; and although they continued to work with their squads, they never again shot to kill. These are not typical cases. But even the so-called typical man does not *really* get used to slaughter. It does not become the natural thing. Although he does it by habit, he wants to be out of the war. He really belongs in the world of normal human relations. So when he quits fighting and goes back home, he does not need a retraining period like the dog before he is fit for normal life. If he did, no one could give it to him, because it is a situation of a man's whole character, not just a battle-conditioned temperament.

But though he goes back quickly and eagerly to normal civilian life, there are inevitable changes. He is not the same man who left that normal life. He is wiser, experi-

enced, more mature. And often he is harsher and more unsympathetic. It may not show when he is with his friends. But it is a rare man who has not had his spirit calloused, who has not lost some strains in his character of sympathy for others, of kindness and compassion.

The Nation Behind the Men Who Kill

These soldiers are not unique psychological specimens. They are not a queer group of special cases, who need a careful reconditioning to civilian life. Most of the common talk, which treats veterans as if they were a special type of people needing a special readjustment, misses the point. Usually they find it quite easy to get back into the old life which they have been longing for all the time that they were away.

Sometimes, it is true, these men who have fought, feel a gulf between themselves and the people at home who have not shared their experiences. Some, after living in the world of brute force and violence, do not fit into the conventions of a more civilized life. But just as many, after learning some profound things in the war, are shocked by the shallowness and superficiality of people who did not pay the cost of the conflict. Often the fighter is surprised at the bloodthirstiness and hardened attitudes of the people at home. *The truth is that it is not just the fighters, but the whole nation that needs a readjustment.* Everyone has got used to reading about vast destruction and cruelty, until "man's inhumanity to man" is no longer shocking.

Thus many in America lost their consciences more than the soldiers who fought. Many a man fighting against the Japanese took time to write an indignant letter to a newspaper or magazine in America, protesting the hysterical hatred directed against Japanese-Americans here. A group of veterans in California took tools and went to a Japanese

cemetery to repair the damage done by "patriotic" fanatics who had desecrated the graves while these veterans were away fighting.

Perhaps these are extravagant examples, but there are many more ordinary ones. An officer who fought through France, Belgium, and Germany was given duties in the military government after the war. His job was to investigate German civilians, sort the Nazis and their sympathizers from the rest, and remove the former from positions of influence. He had done this throughout the fighting in Germany, and knew how to do it and how important it was. He got no delight in ordering Germans around and making them jump simply because he had the power to do so. He disliked having "the power of economic life or death with respect to an individual," as he put it. Then new men came in from the States to work under him. They delighted in their new authority and their chance to show the Germans that they had won the war. Instead of careful judgment between different types of Germans, they liked to bark at everyone and to show off their authority. The battle veteran had to restrain the men who had fought the war from safe shores.

Few realize how war has brutalized the whole civilian nation. The effects crept slowly throughout the country. Before the war started, people recalled the emotional extravagances of the last war and wondered how they could have been so silly. Before the war was over, the same thing was going on again, and few thought it incongruous. Admirals screamed, "Kill Japs," and voiced their hopes that Japan would not surrender because it was so much better to kill the Japanese. People rejoiced in—or at least got used to—the destruction of huge cities and their thousands of inhabitants. When the war ended, the nation needed a major readjustment for peace. But urgent political decisions and suffering people around the world could not wait

for readjustment. Things had to be settled immediately, without waiting for us to be fit to settle them.

The attitudes of war are still with us. Months after V-J Day, a press association reporter in Japan said that he could not send back some news favorable to the Japanese people, because "America isn't ready for it yet." America heard bitter stories about displaced persons in Europe, about cold and starvation for thousands of people, about misery that might be prevented if we made a great enough effort. But these stories came to people who had heard so much of death and suffering that it all seemed commonplace. While General Eisenhower told Congress of the need for food in Europe, politicians bickered about appropriating one per cent of our national income for two years, along with the other nations, for United Nations Relief. While reliable reports from nearly every country in Europe told of unmitigated suffering of wretched peoples, Americans complained about rationing. Those who were sympathetic felt their efforts frustrated by the cynicism of politicians. The politicians had their ears to the ground and acted the way that would get them votes from the people.

It was not that the facts were hidden. They were painfully evident, but people did not want to listen to them. Herbert Lehman, Director General of UNRRA, told a committee of the House of Representatives how UNRRA had been forced, by the delay of Congress, to drop 50 million dollars worth of orders for medical supplies. The newspapers reported 20 million homeless people milling about Europe, 800,000 in Poland alone living in holes in the ground. In parts of Europe it was rare for a new-born baby to live. Britain's Foreign Secretary Bevin spoke movingly in Parliament of the situation on the continent, and many rose to approve his remarks. Telling of the refugees he had seen in Berlin, this man who had lived through the

terrible Battle of Britain said, "As I watched I felt, my God, that is the price of man's stupidity and war. It was the most awful sight you could possibly see."

Germany was put on a ration of 1550 calories per day—an amount aimed to prevent mass starvation but admittedly insufficient to maintain health. Soon this bare ration was cut. Austria, Italy, and vast sections of Asia received even less. In much of the world, people were eating the equivalent of one-third of an American's diet. These were the facts. Few people were aware of them, because few were interested.

Instead, people in the United States were eating as never before. Food rationing was lifted. The consumption of nearly all foods, as shown by Department of Agriculture figures, was higher than before the war; it has been at an all-time high in 1946. Yet when the President finally took tardy steps to increase shipments to Europe, he had to emphasize that it would not be necessary for us to tighten belts.

This criminal indifference was not pure wickedness on our part. It was not simply a sordid hatred of other peoples. If this starvation had been going on in our sight, many people would have wanted to do something about it. But it is always easy to be indifferent about troubles far away, and especially so after a war. Talk of suffering masses of people had become so common that it aroused America no more. The country was tired of hearing about such things, and wanted to rest its mind.

This is war, and its result, at its worst—not simply that people must suffer, not even that they must inflict suffering, but that men and nations should get so used to suffering on the grand scale that they simply ignore it. This, of course, cannot all be blamed on the war. The world-conscience was dull long before war came; if it had been sharper and more imaginative in years gone by, war might have been unnecessary. But war came, and helped the hardening of

conscience and the weakening of sympathy. This is part of what it means when nations organize to defeat nations by inflicting suffering, death, and destruction.

Force and Love

Both an ethical problem and a religious problem are involved in the subject of this chapter. In the end, they are the same. Ethics is a question of right and wrong, and whenever it is pushed far enough, it leads to a question of faith.

Everyone has had experiences of knowing what is right and doing what is wrong. But war and the events which follow it often obscure the meaning of right and wrong, and it becomes difficult to know what is right. Ethics always leads to the world of struggle and of politics, and in struggle and politics any decision between right and wrong is often hard.

Two students in 1938 thought that they saw the war coming. Both of them believed in peace. Both of them believed in justice between nations. Both of them believed in doing something about their beliefs, and could never be satisfied with theories instead of action. As they thought day by day, their minds began to move in different directions.

The first student decided that whatever happened, he was sure that war was wrong. It was contrary to Christianity. He made up his mind that if war came, he would decide between it and Christianity. Probably, he thought, he would have nothing to do with war. But if he got into the war, he was certain, he would not try to disguise it and say that it was right; he would frankly discard his religion. When the draft law was enacted, he registered as a conscientious objector. But since he was naturally a man of action, he could not stand it to stay at home while others fought the war. So he changed his mind, and entered the army. True to his earlier decision, he set aside his religion. What he had to

do, he said, was contrary to Christianity, so he would leave Christianity out of it. He would be honestly cynical about the difference between right and wrong. He ended the war an agnostic.

The other student thought from the beginning that war, though evil, was probably not the greatest of evils. When war became inevitable, he decided that God must certainly want the better side to win. He was sure that there was more justice in democracy than in Nazism, and in the cause of the United Nations than in the cause of the dictatorships. So he entered the war with a clear conscience. He felt that in fighting he was doing God's will. When the war was finally won, he felt that God's will had been accomplished and that he had done his part. He returned to America with a certain honest pride and a satisfaction of conscience. He had no spirit of hate for the enemy and no impulse for revenge; his Christianity would not allow that. But when he heard about the hardship and suffering in Germany, he said, "It's too bad, but it's God's judgment on them."

The problem of these students is important now, not because of its relation to a past decision, but because *their answer determines their attitudes and actions for the future.* Most American Christians have tended to agree with the second student rather than the first. They wanted peace instead of war (though usually they did not do much about it). When war came, however, they were sure that one side was better than the other, and that it must be God's will for the better side to win. Yet there was an uneasy feeling that this killing and destruction was not God's will. Perhaps it had to be done, but it was not exactly right.

Jesus, we know, taught perfect love: "Love your enemies; do good to them that persecute you." "Resist not him that is evil." Human life and the governments of men, we also know, never conform to this perfection. If individuals disagree, the courts of the government can make a decision and enforce it. But between nations, there is no government

which decides and enforces justice. There was no such way of reaching a decision between the Axis powers and the United Nations. There is still no willingness among the nations to turn over sovereignty to an international government. This means that among nations the effective use of force is in the hands of the nations themselves, with only a few restraints of treaties and agreements.

No one considers this a very satisfactory situation. It has resulted in two World Wars in this century, and fear of another is evident in every day's news. The way toward a solution is the strengthening of international ties, and the subordination of force to principles of law and justice. It would hardly be logical to try to solve the problem by having one nation or one group of nations give up the use of force. Obviously, if the nations which want peace decide that they will not use force, and other nations decide that they will use force, the aggressors will get their way.

Is this shoving the teachings of Jesus into discard? I do not think so. I think it is understanding them as Jesus seems to have meant them—as the perfection of the Kingdom of God. Nearly all New Testament scholars agree that Jesus did not intend his teachings as a political program. Rather they are the perfect truth which we never reach in human affairs, but which is related to everything we do. We vote for a Democrat or a Republican or a Socialist, not for Jesus Christ. We may have to decide whether to bloody ourselves in the conflicts of the world with the hope of achieving some sort of justice, or avoiding the struggle and letting the force of aggressors have its way.[1]

[1] Some Christians in many ages have taken a third alternative. Impressed by the terrible wrong in all war, they have chosen to stand against it, as witnesses of a higher truth. What is said above implies no criticism of conscientious objectors, provided their position does not become confused with political isolationism, which is a very different thing. We can be grateful for their stand in war. However, it does not solve the problem of force and love in securing justice.

The perfection of Christ finds wrong in either course. But we must choose. Christ gives us a standard, not a political program.

Yet that standard is the most important thing. If we leave it out, we are cynics. If we remember it, if we realize that the only worthy aim of force is peace and justice, and that the love of God is higher and better than any of our actions, we may bring something out of the ruins of destruction.

Now we can recall the two students who went to war. This conception of Christianity says to the first one: "You are wrong to discard Christianity. What you did in going to war was not disloyal to God. If you chose the best action you could in your situation, and if your purpose was to defeat tyranny and help establish justice, you served Him." To the second student, it says: "You are wrong in your smugness. True, you did the best you could in the situation. But God's will is something far better than killing and destroying enemies. Your duty now is to forgive and help those whom you defeated."

A Story

It was in one of the heavy forests of western Germany. The infantry company had advanced through the woods the day before, cleaning out the enemy groups that lingered there. Casualties had been heavy, and the company would be understrength for today's action. Yesterday, a few Germans had pretended to surrender, and then had fired, costing the Americans several lives. This morning the company would continue the same slow weary advance.

A sergeant had been commanding one of the platoons, since the officer had been killed. He got the orders for the day's movement. There was a new element in the orders today. "Take no prisoners." The company, now under

strength, could not afford more casualties to the enemy's trickery. Even if they succeeded in capturing Germans, they could no longer spare the men to escort the prisoners to the rear.

"Serves the Jerries right for fighting dirty," someone said.

But the sergeant who had to lead the platoon was puzzled. He was not a highly educated man, nor was he usually very religious. Yet this bothered him. He did not like to shoot a man who wanted to surrender. It was almost time to start, and he did not know what to do.

A friend of the sergeant knew that the chaplain was in the area, and asked the sergeant to talk to him. They found the chaplain and quickly told him the situation. What should they do? The problem was squarely up to the chaplain, and he had only two or three minutes to give an answer. He could not go into a long discussion of ethics, but he was not willing to give a glib answer. It was an awful place for a man of God to be standing.

Before we look at the chaplain's answer, we should consider one thing. Whatever the sergeant might do in the situation, he would be no more guilty than millions of Americans an ocean's breadth from the battle. He was a tool in the impersonal mechanism of war. The men and women in the factories at home who manufactured his weapons were equally guilty with him. Everyone who lived in the safety and freedom of America, which this sergeant was charged to maintain, was as guilty as he. Those who took their freedom for granted and lived with a comfortable conscience were more guilty than he.

The sergeant's dilemma was a dramatic one. But in a more matter-of-fact way every American was in that dilemma whenever he thought about the war. For war in its very nature produces situations like the sergeant's, and worse. The acceptance of war means the endorsement of the ruthless practices inevitable in war.

Now return to the chaplain who had to answer the ser-

geant in the couple of minutes before the attack started. His duty was to help men bridge the gap between harsh reality and God. If he ignored either—the reality or God, he could not help the men. He told the sergeant the only thing a Christian chaplain could tell him. *First, the reality could not be escaped.* The sergeant could not evade his orders. The situation formed its own possibilities, and the sergeant had to go ahead. *But second, God could not be escaped.* This thing could never be called right. It could not be rationalized to a sincere conscience; here, bare and uncamouflaged, was the guilt that is part of all war. God stood for a different way of life from the cruelty of battle.

The sergeant went back and did his job.

Some would condemn the chaplain for his answer. But they were not there. They do not understand the tragic forces in life that leave no satisfactory alternatives. If half of America understood what the chaplain said in that two minutes, our outlook would be both loftier and more realistic. When men take responsibility in the world as it is, and live for the world as God would have it, they are saved from naive idealism and rude cynicism. If Americans understood that although we had to fight the war, we stood under God's judgments, even as our enemies did, we would be far readier to make peace with those enemies now.

A Contrite Heart

The ethical problem has become a religious one. Of course, anyone can look at the world and see that something is wrong; this takes no religion. But when man looks at the God who is perfect goodness and love, he knows that part of the trouble of the world is in himself. When we look at the suffering, forgiving love of Christ on the cross, we know that we are sinful. This is a judgment of faith. This is Christianity.

We have seen how it is impossible to make a neat sys-

tem of ethics that will always satisfy our consciences. We have seen how force is a necessary part of any political organization or any system aimed to achieve some sort of justice among men. The reason for this confusion of ethics, where men must do things that are wrong because the only alternatives are worse, is in men. The Christian knows that none of us is guiltless.

The war started by Nazism, for example, was directly due to a group of men who in their lust for power captivated the imagination of a great part of a nation and led it into aggressive warfare. These men cultivated fanatic racial prejudices and utter disregard for treaties, international obligations, and morality. They had to be stopped. But among the nations that opposed them, where was the nation that had always stood for justice? Where was the nation that had no race prejudice, no desire to improve itself rather than the whole world? History shows clearly that Nazism grew in an atmosphere made ready for it partly by the stupidity and self-will of nations who put their own interests ahead of the interests of justice and peace in the years between the World Wars.

The Christian who fought in Europe or the Pacific knew that he was fighting an evil for which he shared the guilt. His country had not always been right, and he himself had not been true to the love of God. He had enjoyed the prosperity and security of America with too little regard for other peoples. He had been too smug and complacent. He had not loved God with his whole heart, and his neighbor as himself. So while he fought the rampant sins of others, he knew that he had his own sins to fight as well.

The Christian knows that there are two judgments upon any conflict. The Second World War is one illustration among many. *The first judgment is between the two sides in the conflict.* One side was so destructive and so wicked that it had to be defeated. Anyone who does not appreciate

this judgment does not know Europe. A government which recognizes no right except its own cannot live among other nations. We fought against nations which gave their people no breath of freedom and no information unperverted to their purposes. One of these nations killed, by its own admission, six million Jews. The enormity of the crimes, known partly before, became even more clear in the Nuernberg trials. This judgment between nations cannot be ignored.

The second judgment is the judgment of God against both sides in a conflict. We know that our enemies were guilty, but we were guilty too. Although we protest that our sins were less than theirs, we know when we look at the Cross of Christ that nothing justifies us. We cannot fight against wrong without confessing that we are guilty of the wrong. We had to go to war because of the sins of men, and those sins were also ours.

When we look toward God, we know that the gospel is right: "Judge not that ye be not judged." In human affairs we have to make judgments; the course of history depends upon them. But when we judge, we convict ourselves, for we too are guilty. However we try to justify ourselves, we know our sin whenever we see God's love revealed in the Cross.

This is not theory. It is the reality of experience. A chaplain in the Pacific learned it afresh when on one occasion he omitted the prayer of confession which he ordinarily used. A bomber pilot told him, "Padre, we missed something in the service today." This religious truth is intensely important for the practical policies which follow the war. Only if we have a feeling of our own sinfulness can we understand how to deal with the guilt of our defeated foes.

The political decisions that must be made after a war are difficult and complex. The church is wrong if it simply tells statesmen to be easygoing. Justice demands punishment of

criminals. Discipline and control are necessary. But the church is right if it tells statesmen that hate accomplishes nothing, that vengeance belongs to God. It is right if it declares that the policies of statesmen, though they may be rigorous, must be aimed at justice and the achievement of a peaceful world.

The German Protestant Church has a traditional Repentance Day each year. When that day came in the first winter after the war, some 1500 churches in northern Germany united in the same prayer.

> God has made us as dirt and dung among the nations. . . . We are deserving of all that is happening to us at this time. It is our fault, our great fault. . . . O God . . . watch over those who have power over our powerlessness and show them that hate can never accomplish anything.[2]

That is a Christian prayer. Christians who read it, and who have fought this war with a contrite heart, will know the truth and the power in it. They will know that hate does not accomplish anything, that war tears down, that in peace men must build.

Christians will know, too, that God forgives. This is part of the unique power of the Christian gospel. The God, who of all gods is most severe in His condemnation of sin, is most ready to forgive the contrite man. Christians, finding this hard to understand, have sometimes emphasized the judgment of God against wrong, and sometimes the forgiving love. But in the Son we have seen the character of the God who, without relaxing His utterly righteous demands, yet forgives. We, who have shared in the guilt of a tragic epoch of history, can find forgiveness. We, who have individually done wrongs of which we repent, can ask and receive His forgiving love.

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[2] Quoted in *Time,* Dec. 10, 1945.

Let us sum it up. Men often look to religion when they must suffer. They often forget about religion when they must make others suffer. But this is the time when Christianity is most important. It enters into our conflicts, but it goes beyond the conflicts that warp our minds. It makes us come out of the battle still men. War can callous and dehumanize a man or a nation. Some of us—soldiers and civilians alike—entered the war with contrite hearts. We knew, though the war had to be fought and won, that we and our side were not blameless. It was easy to forget that in the fighting. In the name of war, many things had to be done. We had to kill and destroy, until killing and destroying became a purpose that made us forget other purposes. It made us forget, until Christian faith again made us remember. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." This is a hard prayer for Christians in a nation that has won a war. We have so much that we must be forgiven, so many whom it is hard to forgive. But this prayer lies near the heart of the gospel. It is the need of all human history. Many a nation, like Rome, has lost its soul while winning its war. "And what shall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul?" If a nation, seeking peace and security forgets its own conscience or the judgment of God upon it, the nation loses its soul. Without a soul, gaining the whole world is meaningless. Without a soul, in the end there is not even peace and security.

Chapter V

The New Fear

IN THE CLOSING DAYS of history's worst war thus far, a new fear came to haunt mankind. Born of a primeval hidden power of earth and sun, discovered by the skilled scientific brain of twentieth century man, the threat of the atom cast dread and horror into the minds of men who must live in the history that they have shaped.

Of course, it was not simply the power of the atom that men feared. That power, released by the sun, had helped to sustain life upon the earth since its origin. What men feared was their age-old fear—*other men*—this time other men armed with a new and dreadful power. Men could use this power for destruction beyond our imagination. We knew they could use it because *we* had used it. Therefore, we were afraid.

The science of war had begun to prepare us for this new fear. It had gradually accustomed us to the new style of war. Blockbusters and robots had been doing their coldly calculated job of destruction for many months. This was not war in the old style, where men slew each other in passionate fury. This was methodical annihilation of populations, accomplished by the unemotional workings of men who knew how to direct force scientifically to do the most damage. It was thoroughgoing destruction, treating all alike, with no distinction between warrior and civilian, between strong and weak, between guilty and innocent. We were getting used to this sort of thing.

Yet we were not ready for it. There was something about it that might make it impossible for the human mind ever to get ready for it. We had thought before of destruction,

but always it was a destruction that *we,* so we thought, could escape. This time destruction loomed that perhaps we could not escape—that perhaps no one could escape.

Man Reaches Too Far

There is an old idea woven through our religious tradition—the idea of man outreaching himself and thus effecting his own downfall. It is the story of the Garden of Eden, of the Tower of Babel, of men and nations who in pride sought to establish their own security without regard to God. This is the same story on the grandest scale yet. This time failure will mean more than misery or confusion; it will mean destruction. It is as if God were giving us a last chance.

The great British cartoonist, David Low, once published a famous cartoon mocking the pretensions of a man who aimed to establish irresistible power. From a background of sky and clouds stretched out a mighty arm and hand. In the palm of the hands was the tiny figure of a man. In absurd pretension, he gesticulated wildly toward the clouds that hid the Almighty, and shouted something like this: "You may have made man, but I, Adolf Hitler, will destroy him." This attempt to usurp the place of the divine, so ridiculous in a fanatic politician, has suddenly become a real possibility of rational science in the hands of men too weak and sinful to know how to use it.

Expert opinions differ only slightly on the potential destructive power of atomic energy and its resultant radioactivity. No ideas are so futile as those of the few military men who say it is just one more powerful weapon, or that countermeasures are on the way. The most extravagant claims are made by the soberest of scientists. Albert Einstein is among the more conservative when he suggests that perhaps two-thirds of the people on the earth might be

killed in an atomic war. Many scientists agree with Irving Langmuir, physical chemist and Nobel Prize winner, when he says that such a war might release radioactivity into the air so as to make the earth uninhabitable. Arthur Compton, who worked on the project, says that in the first hour of war, every city of more than 100,000 population could be destroyed as an operating center. It seems to be common agreement, among those who know, that an atomic war, if it does not destroy all life, can at least destroy civilization.

The practice of wholesale destruction of towns and localities has become common in war. Men are used to the idea of distorting and perverting the course of history through force. But in this idea of actually stopping history by destroying every bit of life in a community, and possibly on the whole earth, there is something that staggers the imagination. In the biblical visions, it is God who brings history to an end with a Last Judgment. For man to end history by destroying himself is not only the worst result of stupidity or of fear and hatred of other men. It is the final audacity of the creature who never learned to live by the law of God. It is the final blasphemy.

No Escape

We might wish that this "secret long mercifully withheld from man," as Winston Churchill described it, had been locked from his knowledge forever. Men have indulged in frantic hopes and conjectures to try to evade the problem, but there is no escape from it. If the secret could be destroyed, never to be rediscovered, the scientists would do it. The Vatican's *Osservatore Romano* recalled that Leonardo da Vinci had once made plans for a submarine and then destroyed them, fearing that men would abuse them; it wished that the atomic scientists had done the same. But of course the submarine was invented again and made

a potent weapon. Atomic power was destined for discovery. If one group of scientists had not done it, another would do it, and probably soon.

Equally futile has been the hope of keeping it a secret. The politicians have been reluctant to let anybody in on it, but the scientists knew from the first that it could not be kept secret. Once it was used, the main secret was out. The remaining secrets would not be secret long. Other nations would have it, and maybe more.

A third futile hope has been that of outlawing such a method of war. Superior means of destruction can never be outlawed, so long as there are wars. We could not refrain from using the atomic bomb ourselves, once we had developed it. It is not more likely that we could refrain another time, particularly if our situation were more desperate. And other nations, knowing that we had used it once, would certainly distrust us and hasten to use it first. It is almost inevitable that if there is to be large-scale international war, it will be atomic war.

Possibly it is better that there are no escapes. One very intelligent girl said in the first days after Hiroshima: "I hope they can't find any defense for it. I hope we have to learn to live together. If we do not, it is better that we should be destroyed than that we go on trying to destroy each other and never quite succeed entirely. If we can't learn to live in peace, we do not deserve to live." Yes, men have temporized for long centuries, developing their weapons and counter-weapons. Perhaps it is better that they should have to decide.

It is little virtue that man has to be terrified into making a frantic effort for world peace. Fear cannot be the foundation for peace. Neither can the simple desire for security be a stable basis of peace. These can lead to pacts and agreements, which for a time may do some good. But it is the weakness of our big-power negotiations that the impulse is

too often fear and the desire for security. Fear rises out of distrust, and distrust is the very opposite of understanding and friendship.

Yet fear can awaken humility and turn men toward the truth. In times of destruction, men have come to see the will of God. Where some men in ancient days saw only disaster, the prophets of Jehovah saw a judgment of God. Out of that judgment came some of mankind's clearest visions of truth. This is the test in our day. If we try to establish international security on the basis of fear and suspicion, it is bound to fail. If we see beyond this, if we see through disaster to judgment, it can succeed.

Something of this humility that sees the truth has been evident in the scientists who have become prominent recently in our nation. There has always been something both grand and humble in the greatest of scientists. Now more than ever before, science is plunged into the realities of politics and the struggles of all living. There was a time when the specialist could engage in theoretical studies for the sake of pure knowledge alone, unconcerned with practical affairs. Suddenly that has changed. The most theoretical of studies has become the most world-shaking. There is no abstract science. There is no pure knowledge existing in isolation. A scientist cannot be part of a man, interested in part of the truth. He is forced to be a whole man, concerned with humanity.

This is a gain. There is something hollow and false about any interest so pure and abstract that it does not concern itself with human life. We saw it in some of the German scientists. They conducted their research for the Nazi government, until the end of the war. Then, undisturbed, they accepted the invitation to continue their work for whatever nation happened to grab them first. This heedless specialization, this irresponsibility and lack of conscience, this escape from human purposes is a sour fruit of man's technical achievement.

Years ago Oswald Spengler, in his prophecy of the downfall of the civilization of the West, saw our whole social organization becoming dependent upon the few technicians who could understand its machines. The engineer, the "priest of the machine," would be the only man who could hold things together.[1] Suddenly in the war, the leaders of pure science have found themselves to be technicians. Then they have found themselves more than technicians or scientists—they are men concerned with the future of themselves and the world.

The scientists have rushed into political discussion, often with more wisdom than the practical politicians. While the professionals in politics have talked about keeping secrets that are no secrets, some of the scientists have faced the reality. There is nothing about scientific knowledge or training that makes a man an expert in political affairs. But some of the scientists, with a humility born of their knowledge, have seen far into the truth. They have told us that neither politics nor science can be separated from conscience. They have shown us that *everyone* must, in this day of judgment, ask the basic religious question: What is the purpose of it all?

It is a demonstration of an old biblical truth that force, in the moment when it reaches its greatest power, becomes most helpless. The United States, the nation that temporarily possesses the utmost in the potentialities of force, is the most afraid of this force. It has been typical of governments through the centuries that when they have sought to guarantee themselves by force, they have become more fearful and insecure. Each new reliance upon force has made its possessors more uneasy. Force is powerless to guarantee security. It surprises us when it turns out to be more of an obstacle than a help in gaining our ends in the bargaining of diplomacy. This is the character of force.

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[1] *Decline of the West,* Vol. II, pp. 504-5.

In itself it can achieve nothing. It can crucify Christ. It can destroy mankind. But in the end, those who use it are most afraid.

We have seen in Chapter IV how no government or political organization exists without force. It is the necessary element in all attempts of men to live together. When joined with justice and morality, it can help to create. When made into a god, it strikes fear into its worshippers.

Can Men Live Together?

The only answer to the new terror is in learning to live together. Wendell Willkie's phrase, "One World," has more important and more urgent meaning with each development of our history. But as the need for realizing "One World" grows greater, the difficulties grow too. The two or three great nations that dominate the world cannot agree on common purposes and common methods of doing things. So beneath the framework of treaties and councils is the old distrust and competition for power.

It is a daring idea—this co-operation of *all* the nations. We have never had anything closely resembling it. One might point to a long history of alliances and leagues between nations, growing in geographical scope until we achieved the United Nations of the Second World War. However, these have all had one common characteristic. They have been a joining of *we*-peoples against *they*-peoples. Common dangers and common interests against outsiders have drawn them together. There is no precedent for an association of all peoples for the common advantage of all. Sometimes it seems as though nothing less than the imaginary invasion from Mars could produce it. But the new fear is not in man. It is in our world; so it drives us to further suspicion and distrust.

It is easy to point to other nations who shove obstacles

in the way of the community of nations. It is less popular, but more practical, to look for some of those obstacles among ourselves. The truth is that while isolationism in some of its forms has been killed, its attitudes are as current as ever. No one tries to say bluntly that we can go it alone regardless of the strife or discontent in the rest of the world. But the old we-ahead-of-anybody-else notion has a big hold.

We like the United Nations idea pretty well, because we and our friends can control it for the most part. We like financial and economic agreements among the nations because, even though they cost us something, they work to our benefit. But we are leery of generosity toward other nations; we don't want to be called "Uncle Santa Claus." As for any genuine desire to co-operate with the rest of the world, for any purpose beyond our own security and economic advantage, there are few who speak out boldly.

The same war that brought us to the necessity of internationalism strengthened the spirit of isolationism too. Many men came home with a new dislike of anything foreign. Months or years in other countries, when no desire was stronger than the desire to get home, gave many a dislike of other lands. Seeing these countries at their worst, in time of war, did not help. Too many Americans judged everything foreign by a limited set of American standards—mainly food, plumbing, and business efficiency. Thus while they returned determined to back anything that would avoid another war, they lacked the appreciation of other peoples which is the heart of sincere internationalism.

Sometimes isolationism takes the form of imperialism. The two may seem like opposites, but they are the two sides of the same coin. Each of them comes from the desire to go our way without having to consult or please anyone else. Isolationism does it by withdrawal, imperialism by getting out and running things ourselves. Many who have seen the futility of isolationism have flipped the coin and turned up

imperialism, thinking they had something new. They have not realized that the whole coin is counterfeit, and that internationalism is a different currency. It demands that we meet our neighbors and work for agreement with them, and sometimes it demands that we do not run our own show.

America, immature but strong, has little notion of how her power puts other nations at her mercy. The whole economic destiny of other countries, for as far as they can see the future, depends on our policies. Often we are scarcely aware of it, or of the resentment which it produces among other nations. Another country requests a loan, or an agreement on use of ships or planes. We decide that we will or we won't agree; often a few politicians determine the decision—and another country with all its people is headed toward reconstruction or to ruin.

We are the only important nation which was not exhausted by the war. We have the surplus capital, the shipping and airplanes, the undamaged industrial plant. We have no cities to reconstruct, no currency problem. From our position, we can pull a few economic strings and force other nations into line. When other countries try to achieve the same ends through cruder diplomatic means, we censure and distrust them.

Distrust breeds distrust. Russia insists upon a chain of friendly border nations, and control of raw materials and conquered industrial equipment. We insist on a vast chain of island bases under our own—not United Nations—control. Each country eyes suspiciously the moves of the other; each move brings the desire for countermove. Underlying it all is the anxiety born of the new fear. So our distrust increases, even while we try desperately to find the basis of agreement.

It ends in the old story. Fear and desire for security will not give the foundation for peace. Only a purpose embracing justice and morality, a common desire for the good

of all, can lead to the co-operation that is essential if man is to build a worth-while world upon this globe. That purpose starts with us.

The atomic age has changed none of the ethical issues of peace and justice. The new problems are the same ones that Christians have felt throughout this generation. The new fear has only heightened them. It has pushed mankind to a pinnacle where we must cling to justice and peaceful understanding, or fall into destruction.

John Foster Dulles, the adviser to Secretary of State Byrnes, returned from the September-October 1945 conference of foreign ministers in London, and said that the United States would have to lead in restoring *principle* to conduct. "If we cannot do that," he said, "the world will not be worth living in. Indeed, it probably will be a world in which human beings cannot live." The two ideas go together—a world not worth living in, and a world in which we cannot live. If men make force their omnipotent god, they cannot live. But then it will not matter. Life will no longer be worth living.

Chapter VI

"That These Dead Shall Not Have Died in Vain"

IT MIGHT BE SAID that it is only luck that any of us are alive now. After a decade in which so many millions of people, soldiers and civilians alike, died, we who were spared are the fortunate ones. Certainly it is through no ability or virtue of our own that we are left. It is the country where we happened to be born, or the places we happened to be during the fighting, that left us alive while others died.

But a Christian cannot be satisfied to credit his luck and let it go at that. He will find some meaning in the fact that he still has a life to live when so many died. Of course, he will not say that God chose others to die and himself to live. That is hypocrisy and self-righteousness. Too many good men died to say that. However, there is a Christian view of providence that makes a difference for our lives. They died; we lived. We cannot claim our lives for our own merit. The phrase of Thornton Wilder, "On Borrowed Time," could be revised to fit our situation. We live on time that has been bought and paid for. Our freedom and our lives are given to us at the expense of the lives of others. We have no right simply to call them our own. They are not ours to do with as we please.

There is one experience, which I have referred to before, that I suppose every war veteran has felt when he came home. At some time, or perhaps at several times, he has seen and talked to someone who was grieving for another man who did not come back. At such a time he feels em-

barrassed. He does not know what to say. He feels almost guilty for being alive when this other man, who deserved just as much to live, is dead. Although the feeling is not quite rational, there is something true about it.

What has already happened, we can do nothing about. We cannot help it now that they died. The least and the most that we can do is to see that those lives were not wasted. Abraham Lincoln uttered the hope and the feeling that men have felt again and again, when in the dedication of a battlefield as a cemetery he expressed the obligation of the living—"that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain."

Their Ideals and Ours

Not every wish of the dead can exercise a claim on the living. There is no use being sentimental about it. Not all who died had an exalted vision. Some of them had little idea of a purpose of justice and peace. Some of them had talked about getting back to America and putting the Negro in his place. Some had said that the Nazis were right as far as their attitude toward the Jews was concerned. Some of them had looked forward to a bitter revenge against the enemies they were fighting. For the few who died without an ideal, we can only say that death was a mishap, not a sacrifice. For those who died with a narrow ideal, we can only be sorry.

Sacrificing and suffering for a cause do not make the cause valid. Too many of the living veterans think that society owes an allegiance to their whims because of what they have done for society. A veteran in New York opened a small bar, and was soon picketed by the barkeepers' union because his employes were not union men. He countered by putting a sign in his window, saying something like this: "I was wounded in Europe fighting for the right to run my

business as I please." The union made the obvious answer. It got pickets who had fought, and let them carry signs saying that they had fought for a freedom that would let them organize. The sacrifices of men do not make their aims right. But these sacrifices do give strength to an ideal that is right.

Those who died—almost all of them—had a faith of some sort. Varied and contradictory though the faiths were, they were usually related to an ideal of democracy and justice. We owe it to them to make democracy and justice as true and as real as we can. Our responsibility is to be true to the best of their faith. To realize democracy and justice is our duty, just as much as it was the duty of some to die.

Their deaths *achieved* nothing, except an opportunity. It is said that we won the war; but what we won was an opportunity, no more. We defeated forces that tried to destroy opportunities. We did not win peace, justice, world friendship, or anything else. We won a possibility, a chance to accomplish these things. If we do nothing with the opportunity, we mock the sacrifices of those who are gone.

Soon after the victory in Europe, General Eisenhower visited London, where he received the plaudits of that great city. In a speech such as one seldom hears from a general or statesman, General Eisenhower talked movingly of his memories of "the crosses marking the resting places of the dead," and of the families of those who were gone. One London paper printed his words on the front page, opposite Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. This is part of what he said:

> Humility must always be the portion of any man who receives acclaim earned in the blood of his followers and the sacrifices of his friends. . . .
>
> The only attitude in which a commander may with satisfaction receive the tributes of his friends is in the humble acknowledgment that no matter how unworthy he may be, his posi-

> tion is the symbol of great human forces that have labored arduously and successfully for a righteous cause. Unless he feels this symbolism and this rightness in what he has tried to do, then he is disregardful of courage, fortitude, and devotion of the vast multitudes he has been honored to command.

This is the attitude of a great commander in a conflict. A similar attitude should belong to all those who were part of the conflict and for whom the conflict was fought.

Democracy at Home

One of the ironic facts of the war was that so many Americans were called to fight for a democracy whose privileges they had never really known. Within the United States, democracy has been perverted for great economic and racial groups. The Nazis knew it and made the most of it in their propaganda. They never succeeded, because our democracy, with its defects, was so much better than their tyranny. But many an American felt a twinge of conscience when he saw men fighting with him who had no real share in the democracy of the United States.

Consider first *the economic group.* There were men in the army who came from families that had never voted. Their parents were the sharecroppers of the South, who saw so little money in a year that they could not pay a poll tax. If they had been given money, they would not have known how to vote, because education too often was meant for the wealthy and middle classes. Frequently the army found itself teaching men to read while it taught them to fight. There were others who for the first time in the army got the medical and dental attention that they had never had before. There were many who through all their childhood had lived in homes haunted by the specter of unemployment. Few of them could return home without worries about economic

insecurity. They joked cynically about the veterans who sold apples on street corners after the last war. Most of them thought that they could get a job, but they did not know how long it would last. They took it for granted that there would be a depression sooner or later. Their economic security depended on the workings of a complex system which they could not help control or even understand.

Neither democracy nor Christianity has a glib answer to the problems of economics. Never in past history has an economic order been so complex. The methods of controlling it are disputed by the most capable men. However, democracy and Christianity can say one thing with certainty about economic problems. These systems must have democratic aims. They must be directed and controlled for the sake of the good of all men, not for the wealth and security of the upper half. Some losses of efficiency must be accepted for the sake of freedom; this is the characteristic of democracy as opposed to a totalitarian economy. Some restrictions must be placed on the power of those who run the show; this is democracy as opposed to unlimited individualism. The solutions are technical, but not the aims. Nothing less than these aims can justify the sacrifices of those who preserved the life of democracy. Christianity can pronounce these aims clearly.

Even more vicious than economic injustices is the injustice to *racial groups* who are denied democracy. The racial conflicts in America show signs of becoming worse instead of better. A rabid minority foment these hatreds. A big majority listen, and indulge their prejudices less noisily. It must be a cause of shame that when the United Nations committee was discussing a permanent site for the organization in America, a delegate from India rose to ask that a place be found where delegates of all races would be accepted.

Some of those who died were Negroes. Many a Negro

fighting under the American flag could not vote in his home state, or in other states could never find the equality and fraternity that democracy symbolizes. While they fought, their race was cheaply and bitterly attacked in the Senate.

Some of us hoped that intolerant Americans might learn something from the Europeans who had far less prejudice against the Negro. Frequently among combat troops, there was a new understanding of democracy. They learned that the color of skin is different, but the color of blood is the same. However some, especially those who did not see much fighting, resented it when the Negro was welcomed and appreciated abroad as an American. They came back home determined to put the Negro in his place. Equally often the Negro came home justifiably determined to claim the privileges of the democracy he had served. The ground is prepared for a dangerous clash. It will probably come in the next period of economic tension, when prejudices usually flare up. The time for Christians to do something is now.

Some of those who died were Jews. Americans who argued with Nazis often attacked their anti-semitism. Their arguments would have rung truer if they could have felt that American democracy was backing them up. Those who realize what happened to the Jewish race in Europe shudder at the evidence of similar feelings here. Congressmen protested piously in Washington against the British policy in Palestine,[1] but made no move to welcome Europe's suffering Jews here, or to bring American Jews within the fraternity of democracy. Even within the church there are those who pervert Christianity by attacking in the name of religion the race that gave them their Christ.

Some of those who died were Japanese. The loyalty and

[1] The desire of the Jews for a homeland where they can live free from the grudging dominance of prejudiced races has its own validity. But at best any such solution can help only a part of the uncounted Jews suffering from persecution or prejudice today. It does not relieve us of a responsibility here.

bravery of the 442nd Japanese American regimental combat team in Italy has become famous. These Japanese-Americans, while they fought, worried because vigilantes were terrifying their families at home.

A few months after the war, General Stilwell flew from Washington to California. He was carrying a Distinguished Service Cross. He went to the porch of a little farmhouse, and gave to the Japanese-American family there the decoration, won in Italy by a soldier from that family. He had been a sergeant who had led his squad in the attack on the enemy. When the enemy drove the squad back, he stayed to cover them and to die. As his family accepted the decoration, they remembered how six months before a band of Americans had tried to terrorize them into leaving their farm.

Surely Americans with any reverence for those who have died will not be content until we practice the democracy that our nation symbolizes.

Justice and Peace in the World

The final word on the futility of most of our fighting was pronounced some 2500 years ago by the Greek tragedian Aeschylus, as he looked back on the already-ancient Trojan War:

> There by Ilion's gate
> Many a soldier sleepeth,
> Young men beautiful; fast in hate
> Troy her conqueror keepeth.[2]

Greece had won that war. But the only result of victory was the dead Greeks in an alien land.

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[2] *Agamemnon,* tr. by Gilbert Murray, in *Ten Greek Plays,* New York: Oxford University Press.

The only thing that can change that judgment on war is the realization of a purpose that is worth human life. We have such a purpose—the realization of a significant measure of peace and justice in the world. Whether or not we achieve that purpose depends on both the past and the future. General Eisenhower has said of the occupation of Germany: "The success or failure of this occupation will be judged by the character of the Germans fifty years from now. Proof will come when they begin to run a democracy of their own, and we are going to give the Germans a chance to do that in time." Similarly it might be said that the criterion of the worth of the whole war will be the character of the world in the years ahead.

Unfortunately it is true, as has often been said, that we knew better what we were fighting against than what we were fighting for. Thus, when we finished the fighting, too many people thought that the job was done. The desire to relax and get back to the good old days dominated American thought, until it determined policies of vast importance. An intelligent military government of Germany hardly had a chance. Too few realized that it was as important as the fighting had been. Washington officials said: "It was much easier to find patriots to fight the war than it is to find some to win the peace."

The American soldier who had fought so well and usually represented his country so well while the war lasted, became discontented with the arrival of peace. His morale and his sense of duty sank, and repeated reports from Europe and Asia told how he bred ill-will toward the United States. It was not the soldier's fault, as a soldier. He reflected the attitude of the entire country. It was the attitude that had been willing to do a difficult job, but had never understood what that job meant.

A few men came back tremendously concerned. They

had seen their comrades die, and felt the terrible urgency of achieving something that would justify those deaths. They hardly knew where to put their efforts. The inertia of the national temper was a mighty, irresistible thing. No one knew how to buck it.

We looked, in the last chapter, at the problems of a world order where nations can live together in peace. Now let us emphasize that such a world can come only through the efforts of men who see the truth and will work for it. There were times in the fighting when men wished so strongly to get home that it seemed as though nothing else was so important. Yet at such a time there was often someone who said, "I'd still rather put in another year than do a half-way job and have to send my son back to finish it some day." What we need to understand now is that victory itself left the job only half-done. The important days are ahead. Justice and peace will never come to a world which thinks that they are achieved simply by defeating tyranny.

After the war, a motion picture was released by the American and British War Departments. It showed, from army and news photographs, the scenes of nations and races joining in a common purpose to win the war. Its grip on the reality of war won it the choice for the best film of 1945, by the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures. Someone, with rare judgment, gave the film the title, *The True Glory*. The name came from an old prayer of Sir Francis Drake:

> O Lord God, when Thou givest to Thy servants to endeavor any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning, but the continuing of the same until it be thoroughly finished which yieldeth the true glory.

War has begun a job that peace must finish. It is only in the true glory of continuing the purposes of justice and peace that the sacrifices of war can be justified.

The Story of One Who Died

There are many men who in their nobility in sacrificing their lives to a Christian purpose might be taken as a symbol of what this chapter is talking about. There is none who in courage and purity of purpose was more remarkable than one of the martyrs of the German church, Dr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer. His story was told by Reinhold Niebuhr in *Christianity and Crisis,*[3] and belongs, says, Dr. Niebuhr, "to the modern Acts of the Apostles."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of the young leaders of the German Confessional Church. He had studied in America as German fellow at Union Theological Seminary in 1930-31. At that time he took the view of many of the leaders of the German church—that Christian faith had nothing to do with political problems. But as Nazism increased its power, he saw the evil of it and opposed it.

Visiting in England in the summer of 1939, Dr. Bonhoeffer told his friends that Hitler would attack Poland soon. The executive committee of the Confessional Synod had agreed that he should leave Germany. In his uncompromising opposition to Hitler, he would not be safe, and it was thought that he should be saved for the work of the post-war church. Dr. Niebuhr and others arranged invitations for him to lecture in America, and he came here.

The war started. In careful thought and prayer, Dr. Bonhoeffer decided that he had done wrong to leave Germany. He said that he had to live through the war with the Christians of Germany. He had to oppose the victory of his own country, but he could not do it in the security of America. If he was to live for the reconstruction of Germany after the war, he decided, he must share the trials of the war with his people. So, though freedom was in his possession, Dr. Bonhoeffer went back to Germany.

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[3] Issue of June 25, 1945.

There he became active in the underground opposition to Hitler. He headed a secret theological seminary. He got to Geneva in 1941 for a meeting of an ecumenical church group, and told his friends: "I am praying for the defeat of my nation. Only in and through defeat can it expiate the grievous wrong which it has done Europe and the world." In 1942 he was in Stockholm, and told a confidant in the Swedish church of the planned plot to overthrow the Nazis and to kill Hitler. Returning to Germany, he spent his time in and out of prison. When the attempt was made on Hitler's life in June of 1944, he was an intimate adviser of some of the men who participated in that plot because of their religious motives. Dr. Bonhoeffer was already in prison at that time. He was sentenced to be executed. When an air raid on Berlin killed the judge who sentenced him before the death certificate was signed, his death was delayed, and later the sentence was commuted. But the Nazis knew Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a Christian and as the enemy of all they represented. A few days before the American army reached his concentration camp in Bavaria, the Gestapo guards killed him.

Thoughtful Christians will remember lives given like this one, for motives greater than the victory of any nation —for motives of faithfulness to God and of justice and peace for the world. There is a sense in which any life, so given, cannot have been given in vain. In God's sight there can be no better or greater life than the one given, humbly yet boldly, to the service of God amid the confusion of the world. In the meaning that counts most of all, such a life is a victory.

Yet lives devoted to God are also lived for the sake of men. They are given with the purpose that they may mean something for the good of mankind. Whether they contribute to this depends, in the end, on us. They did all they could. The rest is ours.

Chapter VII

"For Us the Living"

AMERICA REJOICED when victory ended the worst of wars. Part of the rejoicing was because "we" won, not "they." Bound up with it was the rejoicing because "right" won, not "wrong." That judgment makes Christians stop to consider. In one of the seldom sung stanzas of the National Anthem are the lines:

> Blest with victory and peace,
> May this heaven-rescued land
> Praise the power that hath made
> And preserved us a nation.

This implies that we deserve to win. Nearly every speech or book or editorial ever written about the war has implied the same thing.

Christians will always know that this is not *entirely* true. Throughout the war they tried to make it true. They insisted wherever they could make themselves heard that we remember the aims for which we said we fought. They insisted just as fervently after the war, when they bent their efforts toward justice in international decisions and toward getting food and clothing to suffering peoples.

Throughout the struggle, we were sure that between the two world line-ups, there were evident differences of inestimable importance. In this sense, we deserved to win. But sure of our cause though we were, we were troubled by a persistent question: How worthy were we to be God's executors of judgment?

There is a recurrent conception of history in the Bible that has been hard for our age to understand. It involved

a certainty that God's hand was at work in history. Sometimes dimly, sometimes vividly the purposes of the Lord were seen in the movements of the nations. The purposes were never perfectly obvious, never complete; they would never be fully revealed until their completion in the future —perhaps the distant future, perhaps the End of History and a Last Judgment. In the present, it was sure that God overthrew the haughty and evil nations. They might hold their power for a time, but their destruction was sure. Yet the nations which overthrew these guilty nations were never entirely good. They accomplished God's purpose, but they were unworthy of Him. Sometimes they were worse than the nations they chastised. Their time too was short. Their pride and wickedness would also be overthrown.

There is no assurance in this conception that the most righteous nations or people will always prosper or be secure, as we usually understand these terms. Sometimes they are at the mercy of the wicked. What is sure is that evil contains in itself the power that destroys it. By its opposition to God it guarantees its own destruction, and it is incidental what historical power works God's will in overthrowing it. The prophets saw that he might choose an alien land and an evil one to bring deserved punishment to His chosen people.

This idea of history is not often understood now. Some people make it foolish by trying to understand it in a crude and precisely literal way. Others reject it, and try to understand history as economic determinism, or evolution, or a succession of accidents with no meaning at all. But this biblical idea has a religious meaning that becomes important when we understand it. It makes us see the importance of being worthy to execute God's judgment in history. *It makes us determined in conflict and humble in victory.* It destroys self-satisfaction and haughtiness when we have won. It makes us look to God who "hath scattered the proud" and

"exalted them of low degree." It looks to God in every age and asks what we can do in our time. This question of what we can do is the outcome of all the previous questions of this book.

The Individual and His God

Purposes, faiths, and beliefs all belong to individual people. They may be the purposes of a race or nation, the faiths of our fathers, the beliefs of great traditions; but they become real in men. The hopes or despairs of our age will not be realized in San Francisco, London, or Moscow, or wherever the diplomats meet. What men do in those meetings depends on what men are in their native lands. The Christian who wants a better world will have to start close to home. He thinks of the old prayer, "Lord, restore Thy church, beginning with me."

We are tied up in communities, nations, and processes of history, we realize. But we are also ourselves. Something in the self does not depend upon these other things. However we are bound into the good and bad of our country and our age, it is finally in ourselves, we know, that we face God.

In the midst of the titanic movements of history and the mighty clashes of great powers, the most poignant voice is that of the individual who, engulfed in it all, asks what it can mean for him. The answer for the individual, we have seen, depends partly on what he and other men make out of this historical situation. But regardless of success or failure of historical movements, a man in his solitariness lives not only with his fears; he lives with His God. This brings us back to what we have discussed before—the man who hears the *No* and the *Yes* of God. It brings us back to the faith of Paul, who fearlessly moved the tides of western history because he knew that nothing could separate him from the love of God in Christ.

There are individuals who as Americans, Japanese, Germans, Russians, or whatever they may be, are living for the glory of God. There are some who, not knowing whether they stand in an age of catastrophe or of new achievement, will live victoriously whatever the outcome. If we move upward, they will be the creative spirits of the better age. If we go down, they will not despair or succumb. Whichever direction history goes, there will be, as at the Last Judgment, the sheep and the goats. Not all the sheep will be churchmen; not all the goats will be heathen. The test is the man himself.

Some men, in this year of our Lord, will trust God and live by the best that they know. That is the first thing that a man can do. The rest follows from it.

The Christian Community

A genuine answer for the individual will be actualized in the community. We have talked about the Christian responsibility to the community of nations; let us now consider the relation of the individual to the special Christian community.

The church is not something that needs explaining; it is an inevitable part of Christianity. People with a living faith have to share it. They have to work together and worship together. They feel a bond that unites them. When men are Christians, there has to be a church. Since men are Christians around the world, and since one God is Lord of the world, there has to be a world Christian community, however vague or clear its organization may be.

There are many who like to criticize the church, and fewer who try to improve it. The honest criticisms that may be directed against the church show how it needs those who will improve it; a dead church cannot represent a living faith. When men under the shock of our decade have realized a

new faith, they often found too little vitality in the conventional church. Yet the fact remains that during a world war the church stood for things and accomplished things that no other group was doing.

We have heard often of American airmen who parachuted onto Pacific islands and were saved by the goodness of Christians of whom they had never heard. Their safety was not the result of the foresight of men who planned wars; it came from the Christianity of the natives who had learned from American missionaries. Here was a Christian belief, and a Christian church, more impressive than they had known in America.

The men who landed in Japan found Christians firm in their faith, despite bombings from our planes and persecution by nationalistic groups who hated the religion of their enemies. Representatives of the American Protestant Church, visiting them in the early months of occupation found them grateful for the end of war, and hopeful for the overthrow of the Japanese militarists. One army officer was so impressed by the Japanese Christians that he wrote his wife and asked her to give more than a thousand dollars to mission work in Japan. There is a spirit in such foreign Christians that should wake us up.

The German church, weakened by persecution and struggling against the despair that grips its country, still can speak vigorously to us. In October, 1945, the Council of the Evangelical Church met in Stuttgart. This is part of a declaration written there:

> We with our people know ourselves to be not only in a great company of sorrow, but also in a solidarity of guilt. With great pain do we say: Through us has endless suffering been brought to many people and countries. . . . We accuse ourselves for not being more courageous, for not praying more faithfully, for not believing more joyously and for not loving more ardently. . . .

> Our hope is in the God of Grace and Mercy that He will use our churches as His instruments and will give them authority to proclaim His word and in obedience to His will to work creatively among ourselves and among our whole people. That in this new beginning we may become wholeheartedly united with other churches of the ecumenical fellowship fills us with deep joy.
>
> We hope in God that through the common service of the churches the spirit of violence and revenge which again today wishes to become powerful, may be brought under control in the whole world and the spirit of peace and love may gain the mastery wherein alone tortured humanity can find healing.

Among the Christians preparing that declaration were Martin Niemoeller and many another who had suffered for their faith. American Christians will feel ashamed when they see such stalwart men accusing themselves. Their voice is weak in a land where hunger, defeat, and occupation armies talk so loud, but it has the strength of truth. Surely they deserve anything we can give them.

Anyone in the Christian community lives in a world community. Certainly it is significant that in the years when every form of world political tie was shattered, the World Council of Churches lived and grew, working through open or underground channels, to achieve the unity of the Christian community. When unity of organization was impossible, the unity of faith was there.

Two phrases from the first two centuries of Christianity express the meaning of a world Christian community. One is what the Greeks in Thessalonica called Paul and his little group of Christians: "These that have turned the world upside down."[1] The other is from an unknown writer, somewhat later, who said in a letter to a friend: "Christians hold the world together."[2]

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[1] Acts 17:6.
[2] *Epistle to Diognetus.*

Both phrases were, of course, ridiculous exaggerations. Paul and his fellow Christians had turned no world upside down; they had only disturbed a few complacent people in a few Mediterranean towns. A little later, far from holding the world together, Christians were one sect among the many more powerful ones that jostled and intermingled in the Roman Empire. Yet both phrases were *true*. Christianity has the originality and the power to turn worlds upside down in any age. The traditionalists are always afraid when they hear it preached; they do not dare to heed it. On the other hand, the only possible bonds that can hold our world together will find their strength in the justice rooted in the Christian God. Christian communities around the world can enhance those bonds in the fellowship that transcends the boundaries made by men.

The Light in Darkness

We started this book with a situation and a question. The situation is our world after its worst war—our world in the *today* that flows out of yesterday and into tomorrow. The question is whether we can find any meaning in the confusion and conflict of this age—whether God is here.

The question keeps coming back to us in various ways. It concerns those who have suffered from the cruelties of an age of furious hates and calculated destruction. Again it meets those who have been driven by the impersonal forces of our time to inflict suffering for the sake of something better. Finally, it centers in each of us who looks with fear into a world and a history which he does not understand. Yet the question is always the same. It is the search for hope in the midst of uncertainty and fear.

In all the incomprehensible chaos, the man of faith can be sure of one reality—God. He is sure of God, not because faith in God explains everything doubtful. Rather, the Chris-

tian knows God because, throughout the turmoil and insecurity of events, he feels the claim of God upon him, as something he cannot escape. Whether he is tempted to succumb to the despair of the suffering, or to take pride in the superiority of the victor, he finds that God claims him for something higher. With God's claim comes God's love. When men trust Him, they know His power and His love.

Harry Emerson Fosdick tells of the German boy, educated in the Nazi schools and youth movements, who told his Christian parents, "Hitler is getting so much bigger while Jesus Christ is getting so much smaller." Now the boy knows that Hitler was never so big as he thought. If he looks to Jesus Christ, he will find Him, bigger than the evil of all ages.

It is good that we can know this, now that Hitler's tyranny has fallen, as all tyrannies fall. It is better if we can know, like the modern Christian martyrs, that just as truly before as after the fall of tyrants, Jesus Christ is greater than they.

Christ is great because He is the Son of God, who reveals God to men. In the Son we have seen the Father. We have seen the justice of God, inexorable and unyielding. We have seen His love, bending toward man to give him hope amid despair. He drives us into the strife of life, impelling us to serve Him by serving men. He is the Lord of Heaven and Earth, in Whom faith sees the truth beyond despair.

Christ, the Son of the living God, is in the words of the Fourth Gospel the light that shines in the darkness. Our age has known the darkness. In it all, Christians can see the light from God.

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